

岩明均 歴史作品集

雪の峠 剣の舞

ゆきのとうげ

つるぎのまい



Hitoshi Iwaaki

岩明均

KCDX1387

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9784063343878



1929979006808

ISBN4-06-334387-1

C9979 ¥680E (0)

講談社

定価: 本体 680円(税別)

雑誌 46317-87



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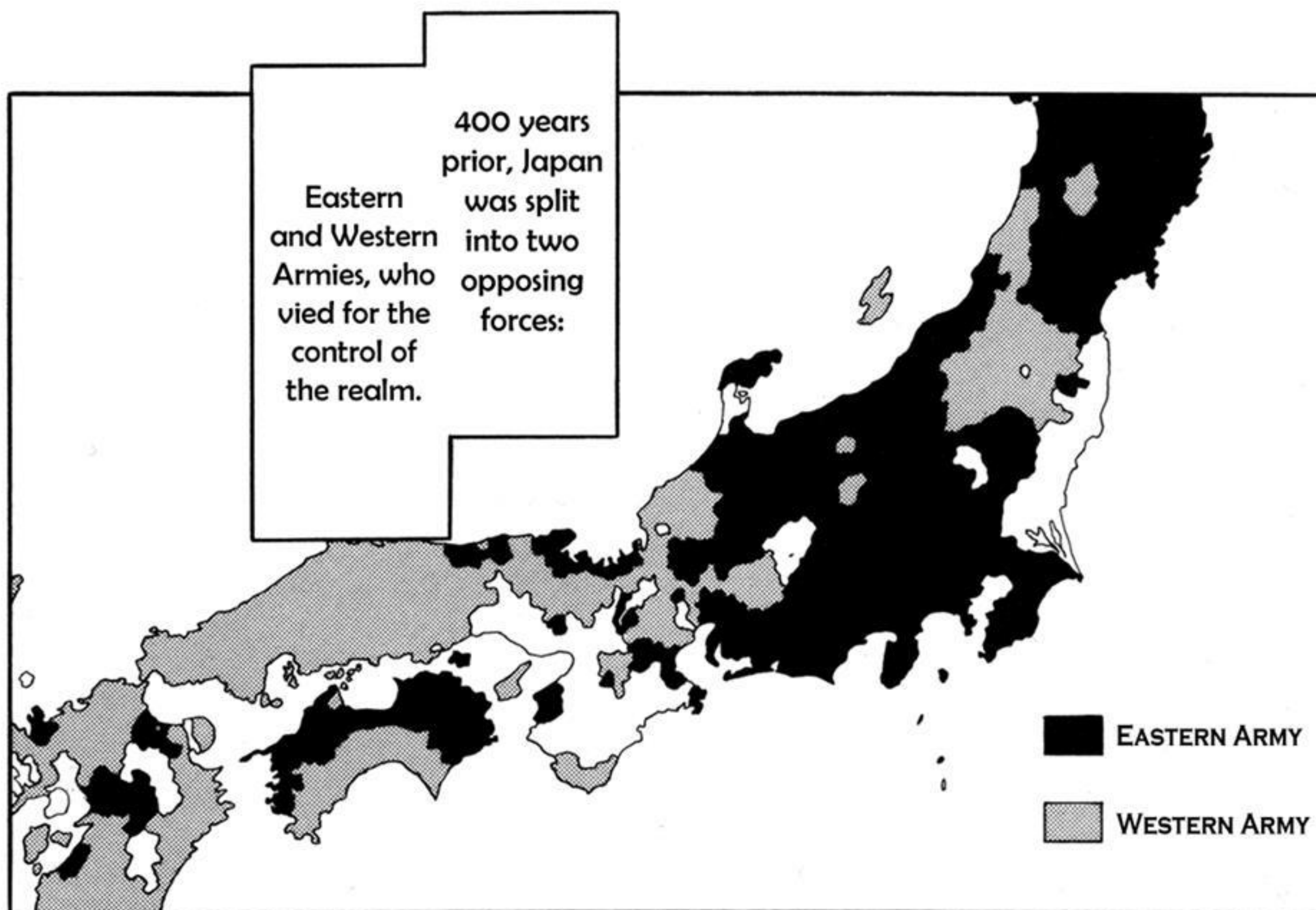
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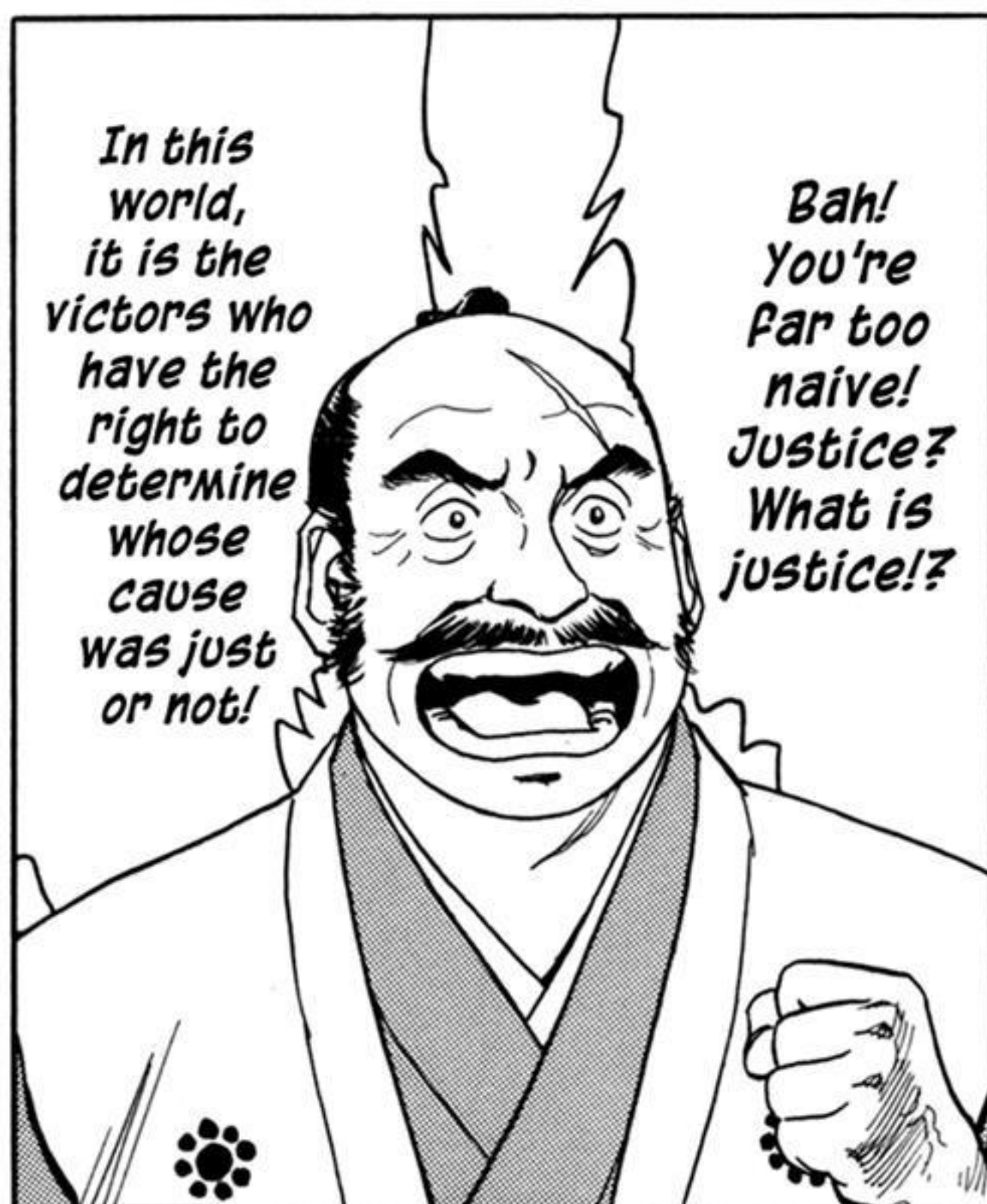


Snow Ridge

Chapter 1: Northern Sea





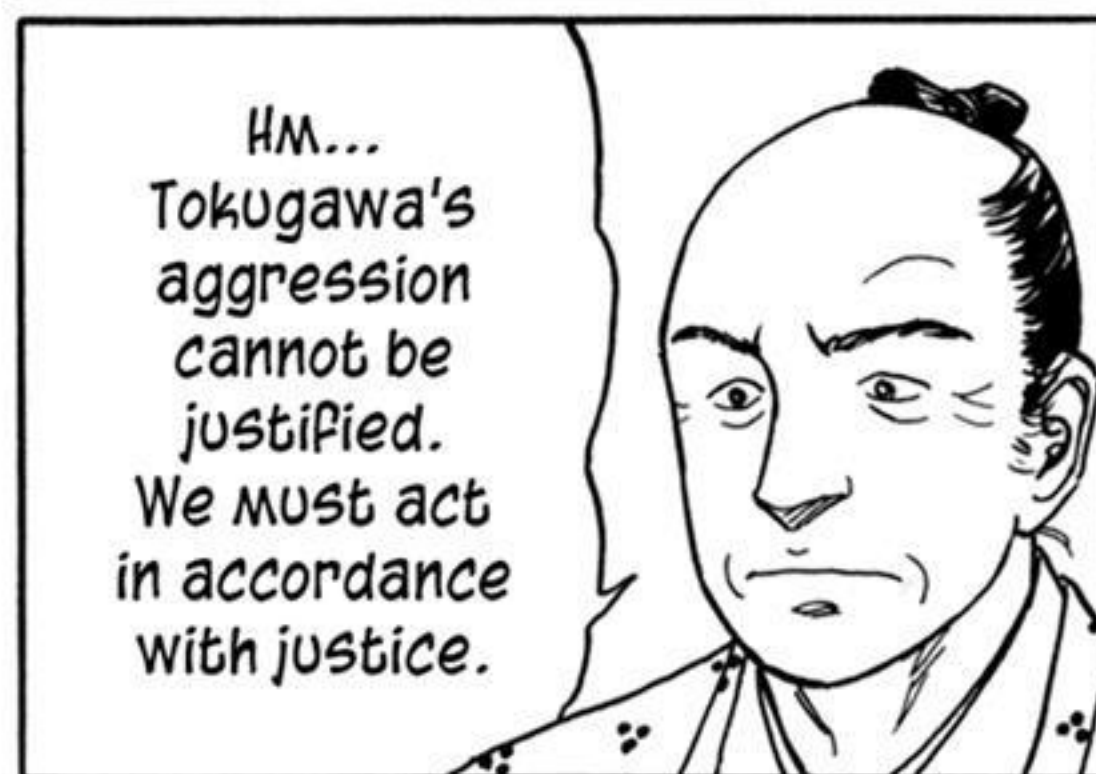


In this world, it is the victors who have the right to determine whose cause was just or not!

Bah! You're far too naive! Justice? What is justice!?



The Western Army is far too disorganized! It is sheer folly to turn our swords against Tokugawa!



Hm... Tokugawa's aggression cannot be justified. We must act in accordance with justice.



We've already paid back any debts we owed when we saved him from grave danger last year!



What would the world think of us if we were to turn against our benefactor?

But our Satake clan owes a great debt to the commander of the Western Army, Ishida Mitsunari.

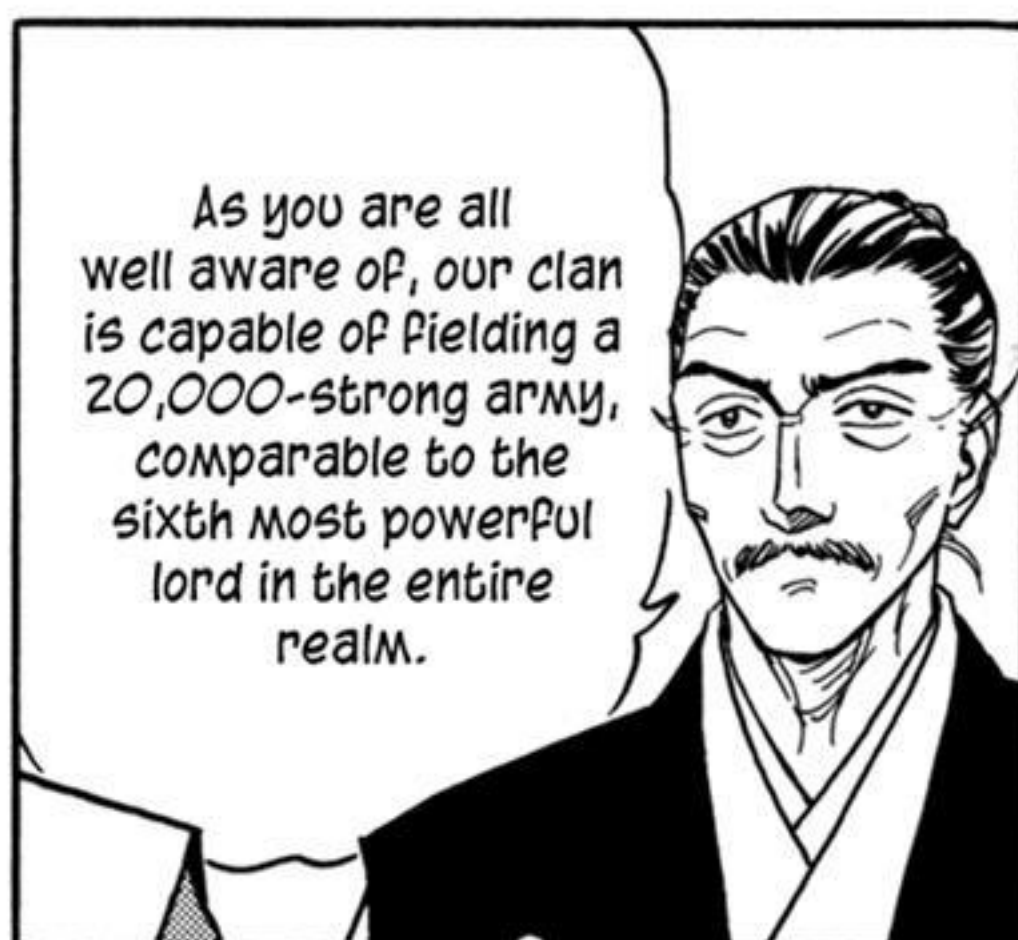
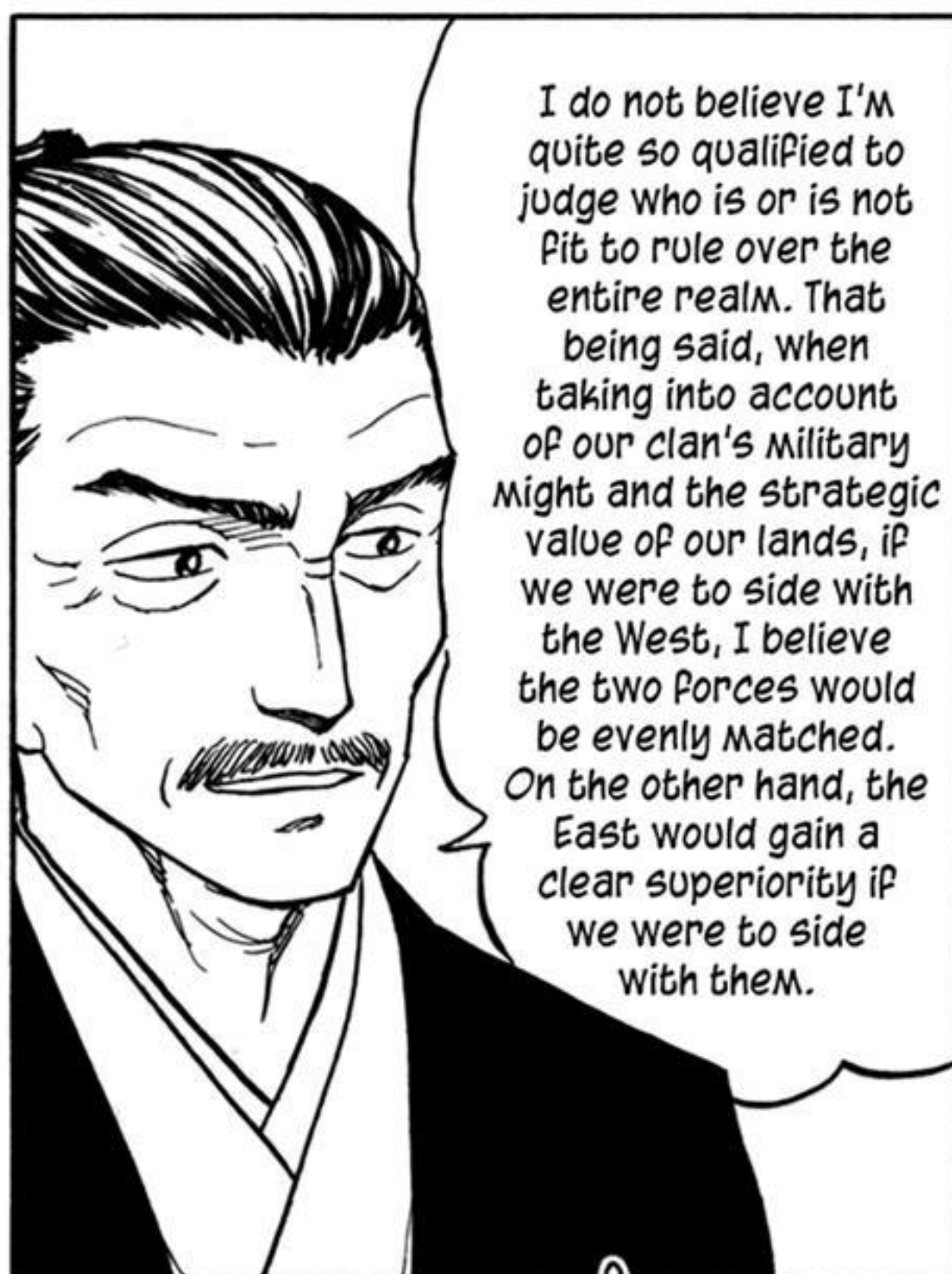


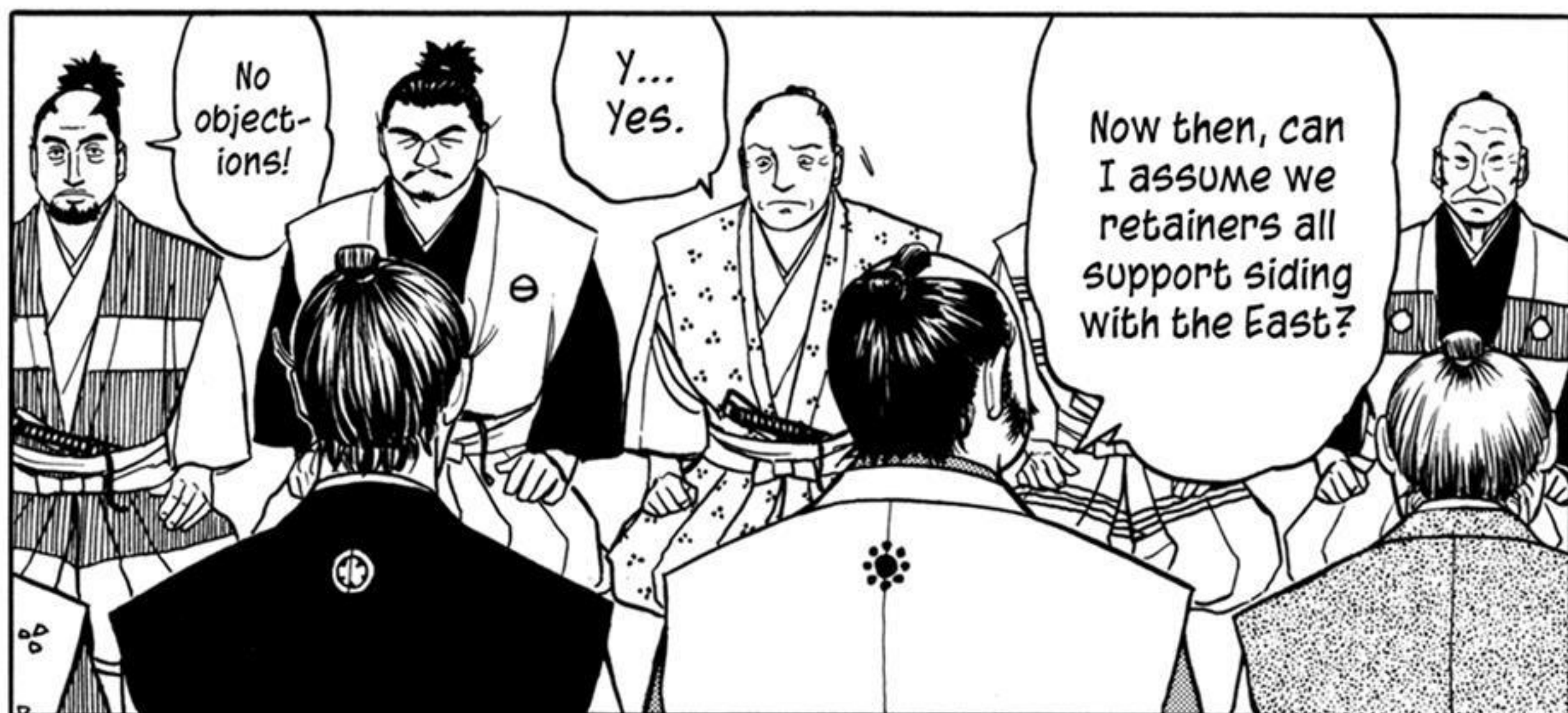
Ah, an excellent opinion, Ōtono!

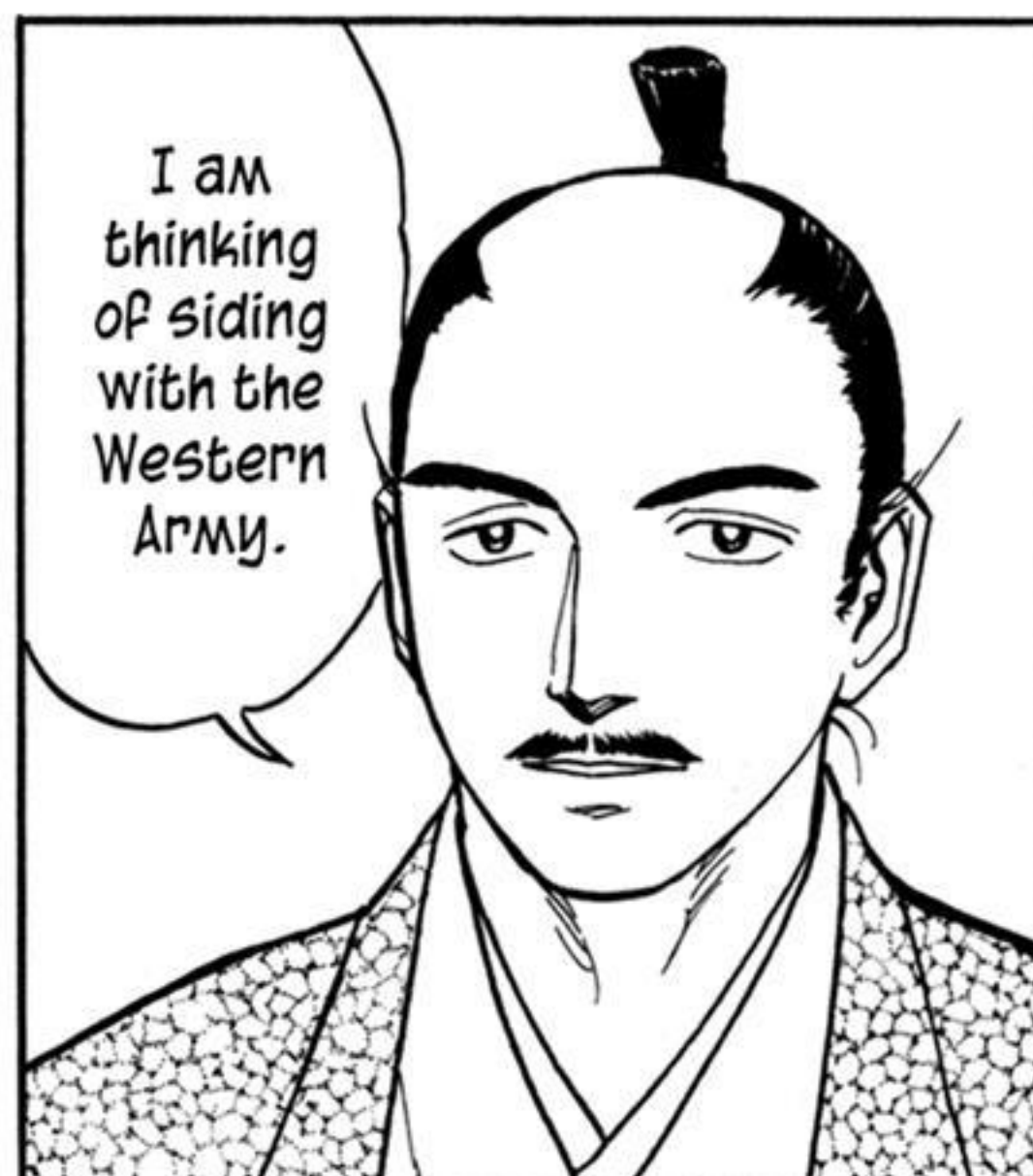


Is Ishida really a man capable of holding the entire realm together...?

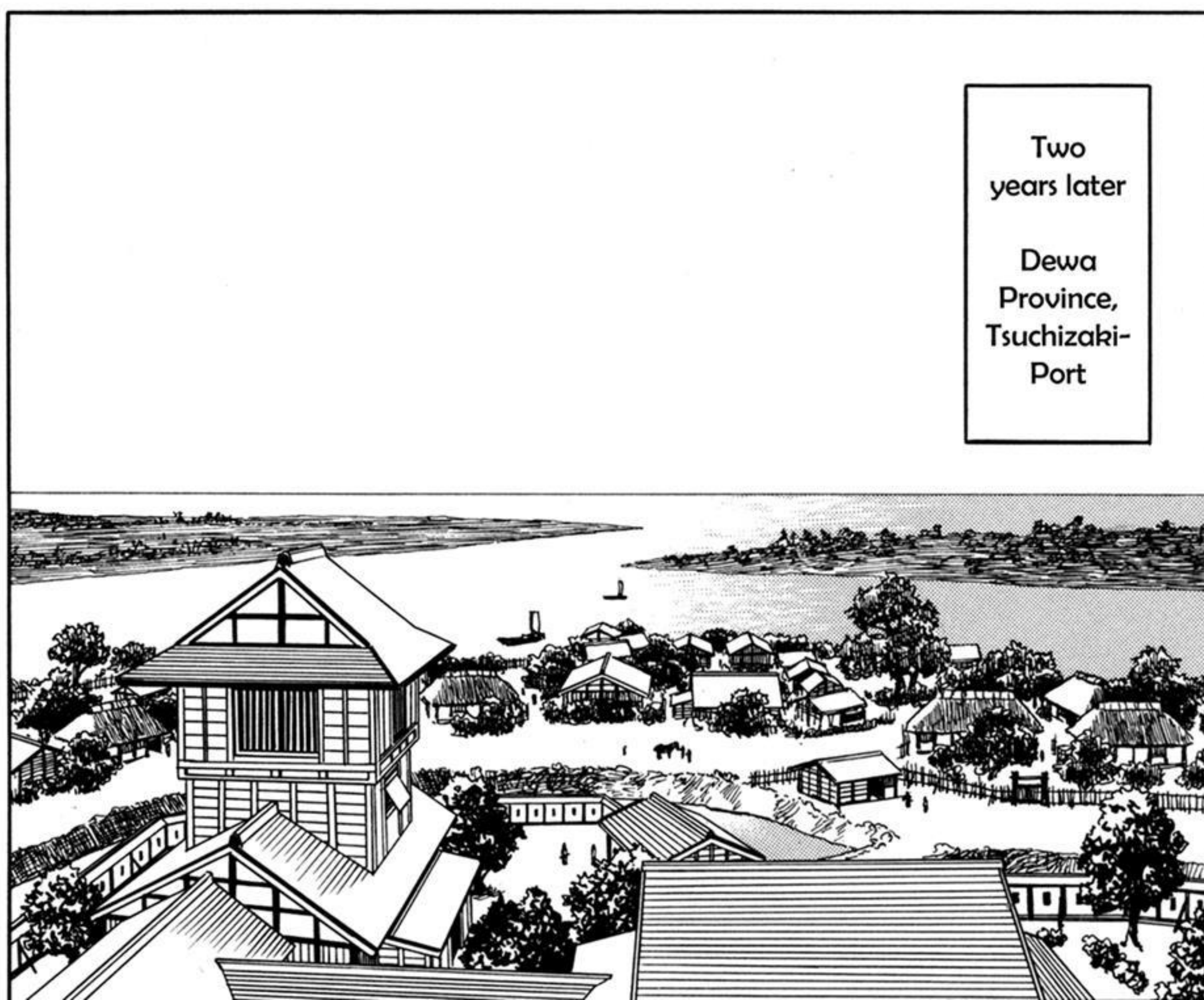
Moreover... This is not only a matter of our clan's honor. We must also consider the fate of the whole realm.



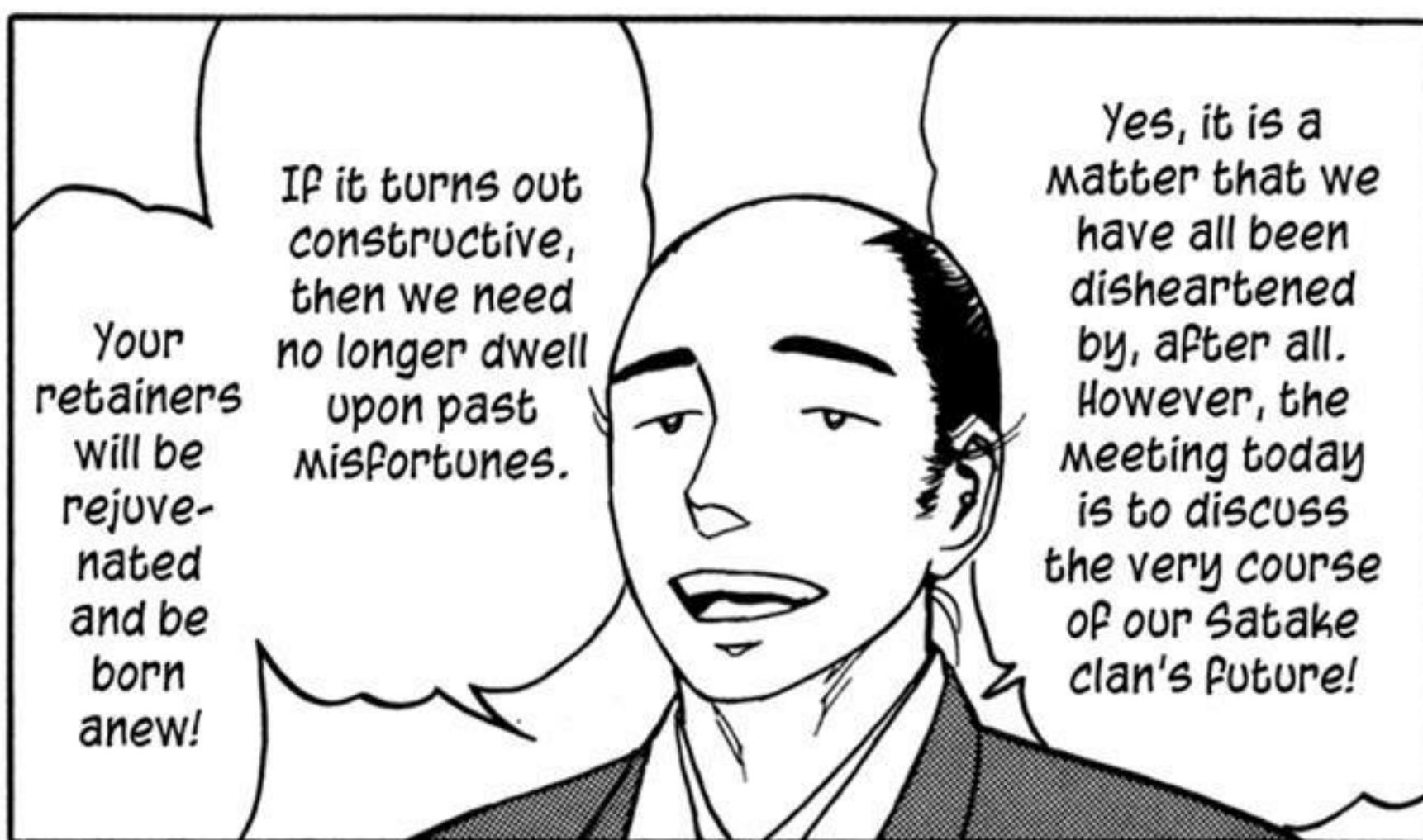


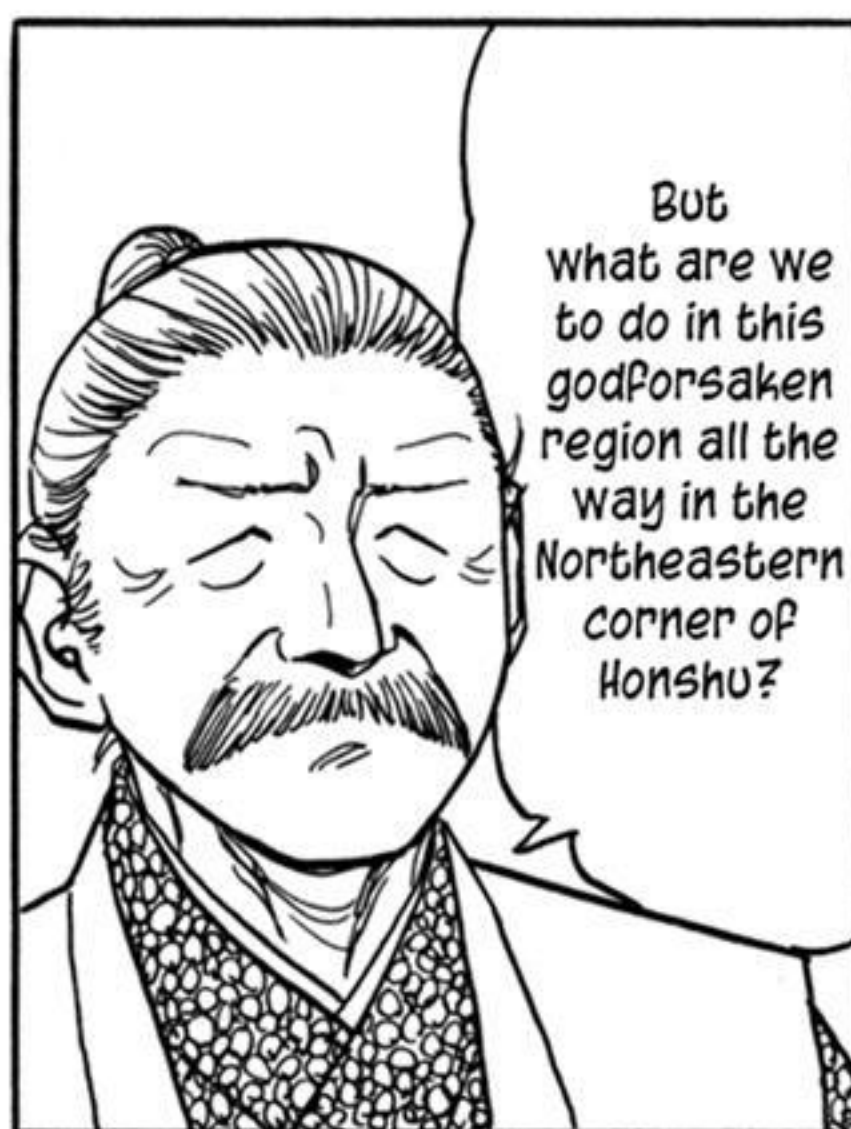


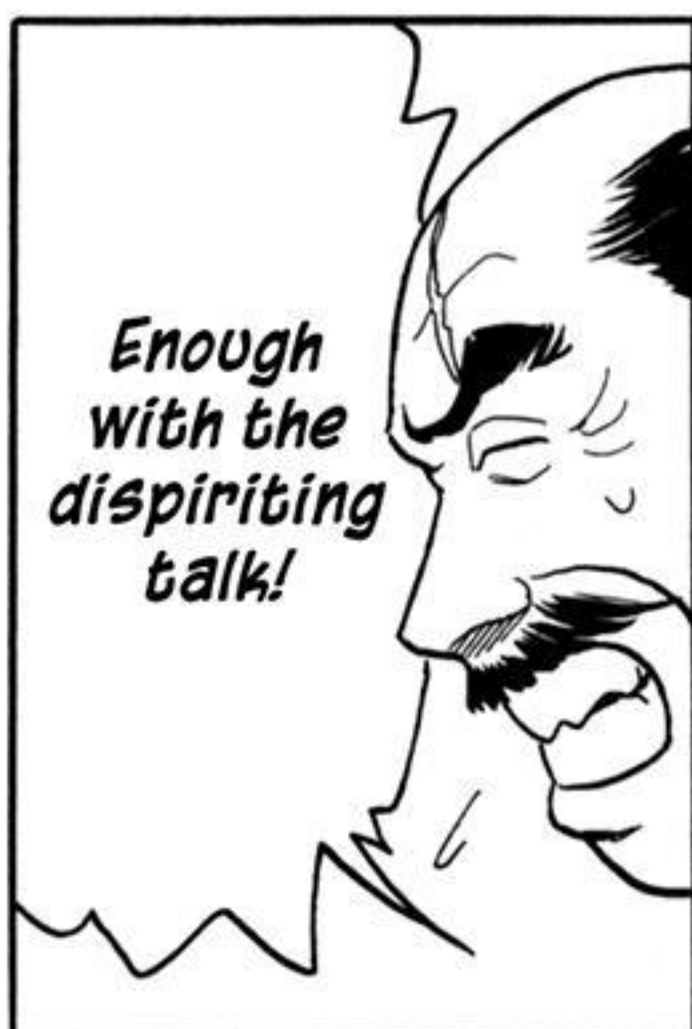
**In Keichō year 2 (1600),
the Tokugawa-led Eastern Army triumphed at the Battle of Sekigahara.**











Enough
with the
dispiriting
talk!



But still... How
many years has
it been since we
proved our worth
in the battlefields
of Kanto?



Silence!
*I'm sick
and tired
of that!*



Harder
said than
done...



Karō
Kawai
Ise-no-
kami

If you
wish to talk,
then discuss
something
more hopeful!



Oh yes,
but I would
never tire
of hearing
them again.
He was my
hero back in
the good old
era...

I see...
The
"good old"
times...



Won't you
regale
me with
another
tale of
Kenshin?

Ah,
Kaji-
wara.



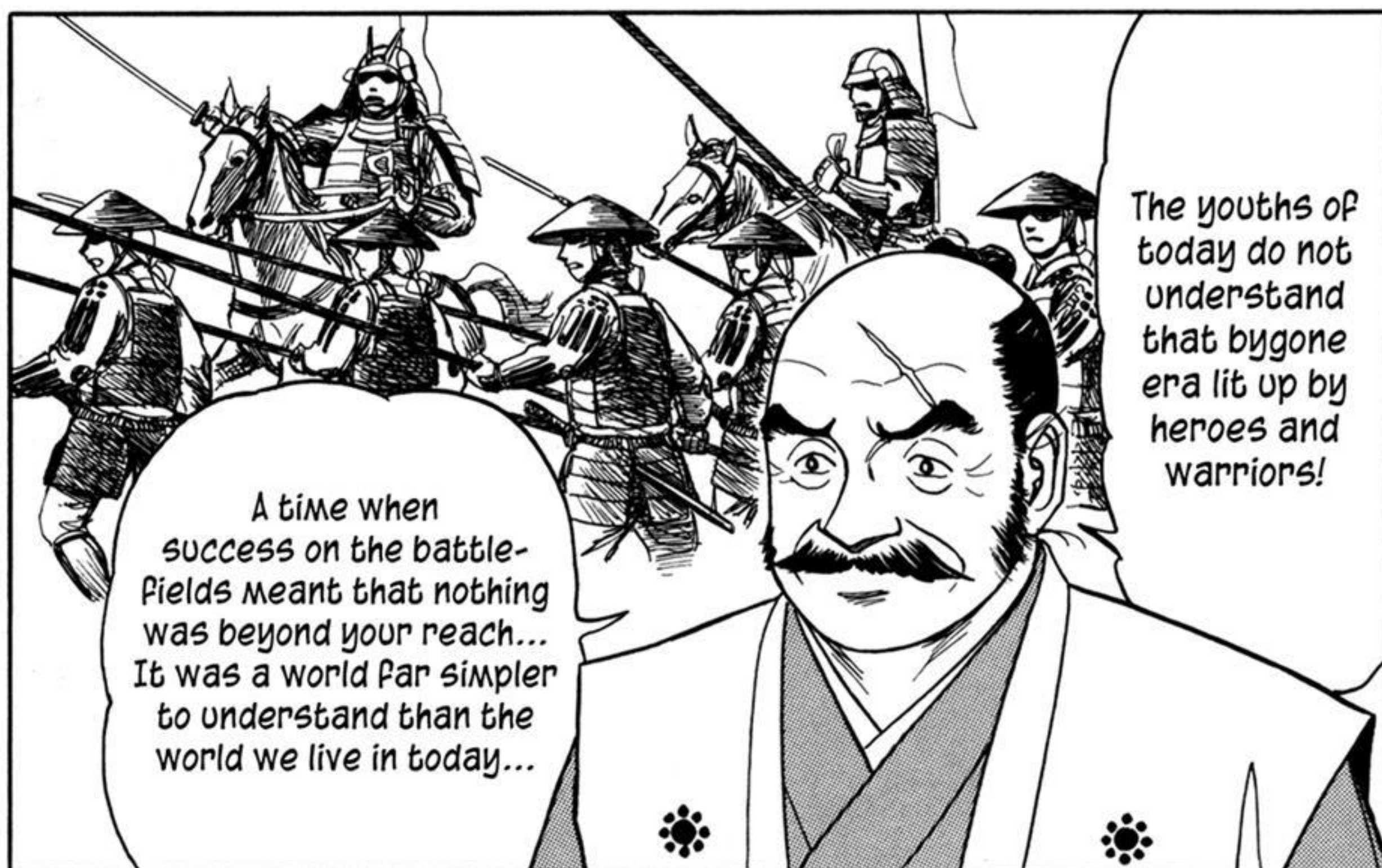
Again?
Have I not
told you
his tales
more times
than I can
count?

Jūshin
Kajiwara
Mino-no-
kami

*Karō: Highest-ranking vassal under a daimyo

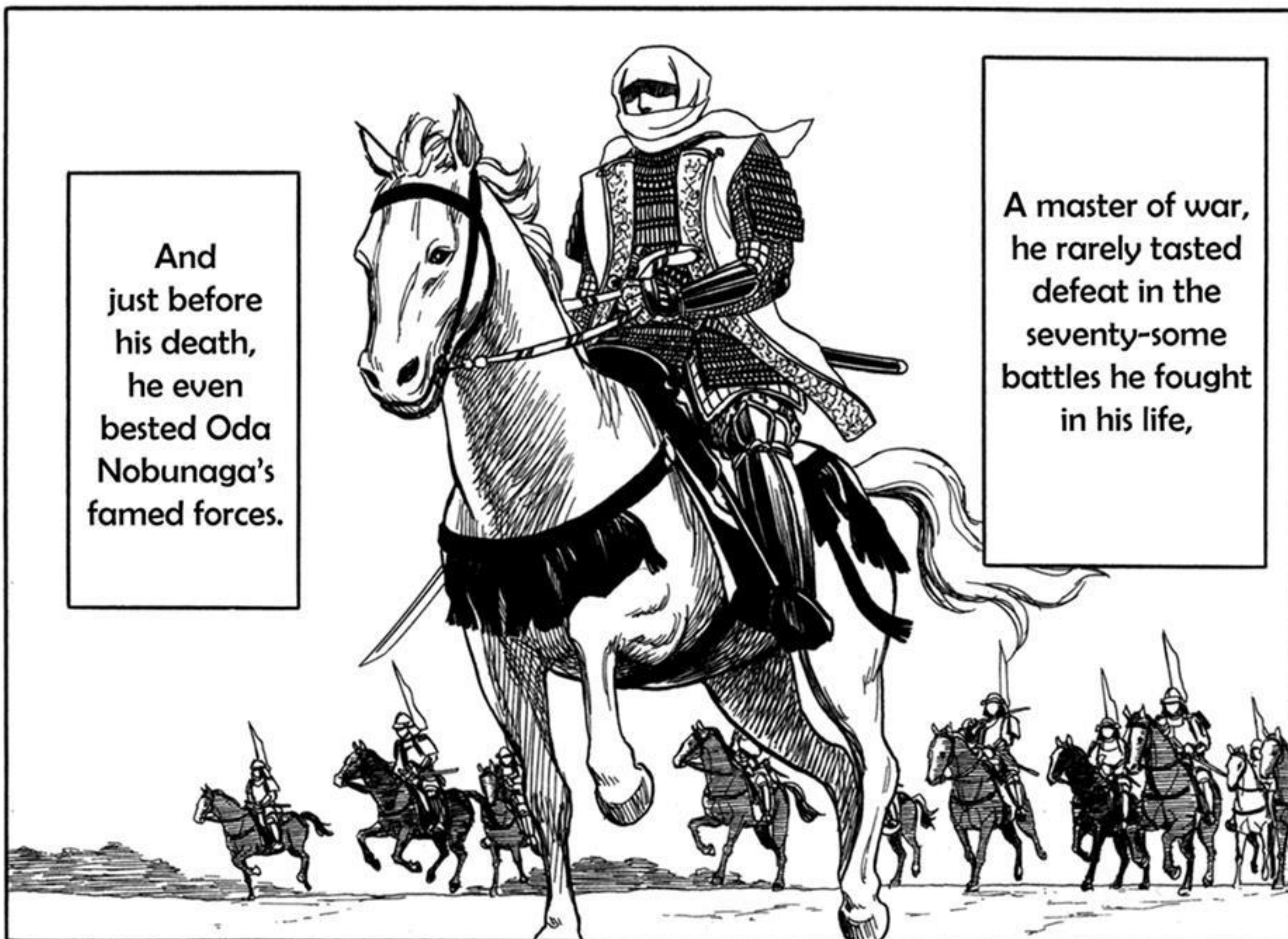
*Jūshin: The senior vassal/statesman of sorts, ranked just below the Karō

*-no-kami: Originally meant provincial governor but merely denoted an honorary title by the Sengoku period



And
just before
his death,
he even
bested Oda
Nobunaga's
famed forces.

A master of war,
he rarely tasted
defeat in the
seventy-some
battles he fought
in his life,



Barely
twenty-five years
after his death,
Kenshin had
already become
a legendary
figure whom
every warrior
aspired to be.

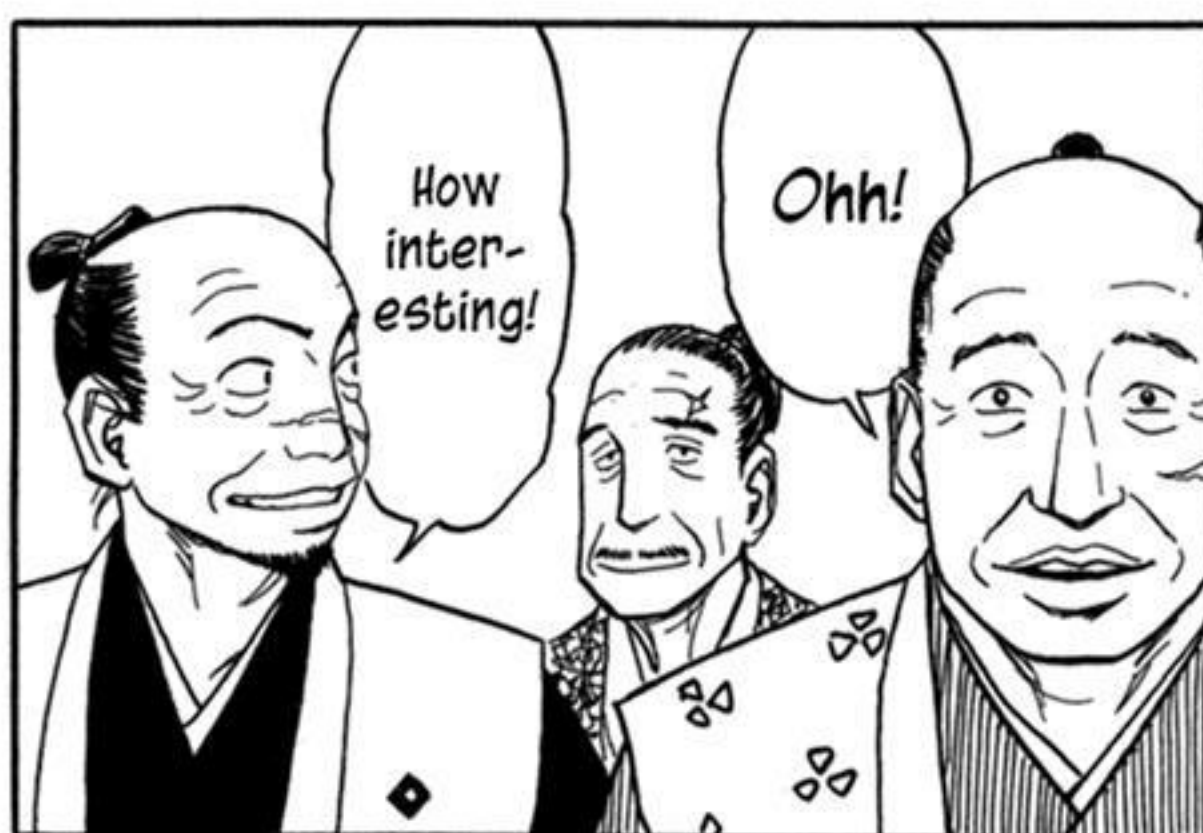


Then
allow me to tell
you a side of
Kenshin rarely
spoken of.



And Kajiwara Mino
was one of the few
men still alive who
had the fortune
of once seeing the
legendary Uesugi
Kenshin in person.





At the time, Matsuyama was a critically important castle on the province's borders, so it had been amply stocked with weapons, gunpowder, grain, and a garrison of 3,000 to guard it but...



My father's castle in Musashi province, Matsuyama castle, found itself besieged by the combined forces of Takeda Shingen and Hōjō Ujiyasu.

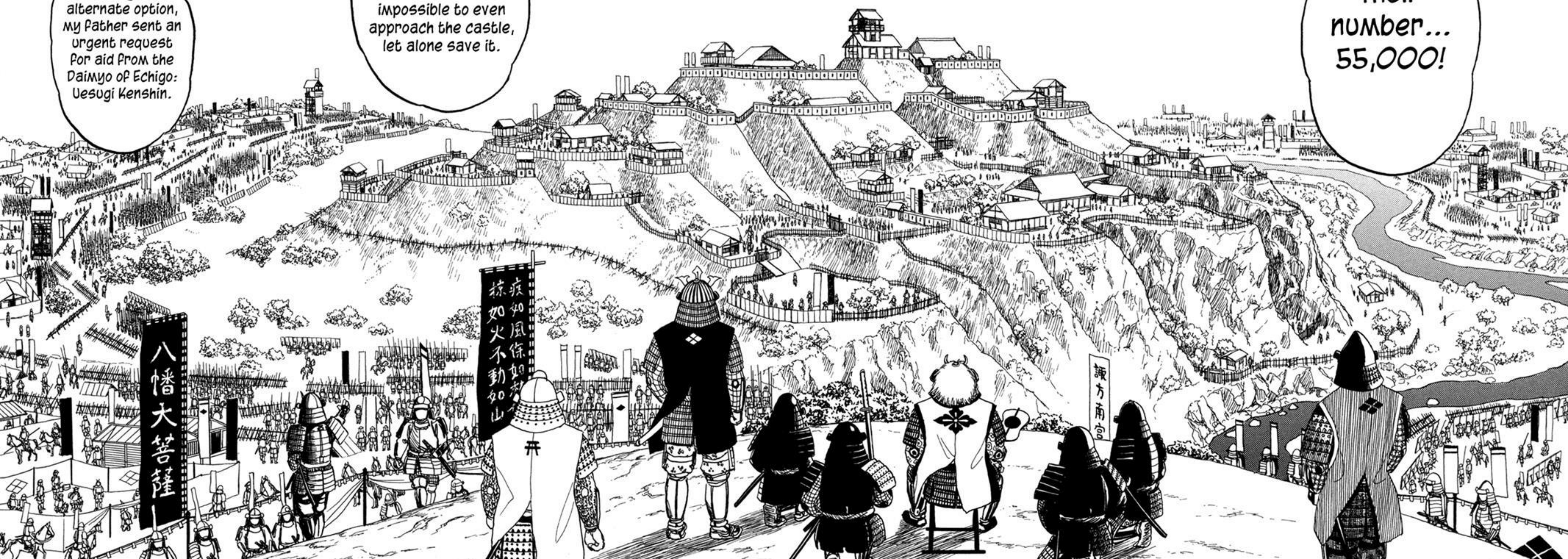
Forty years ago, in the winter of the fifth year of Eiroku...

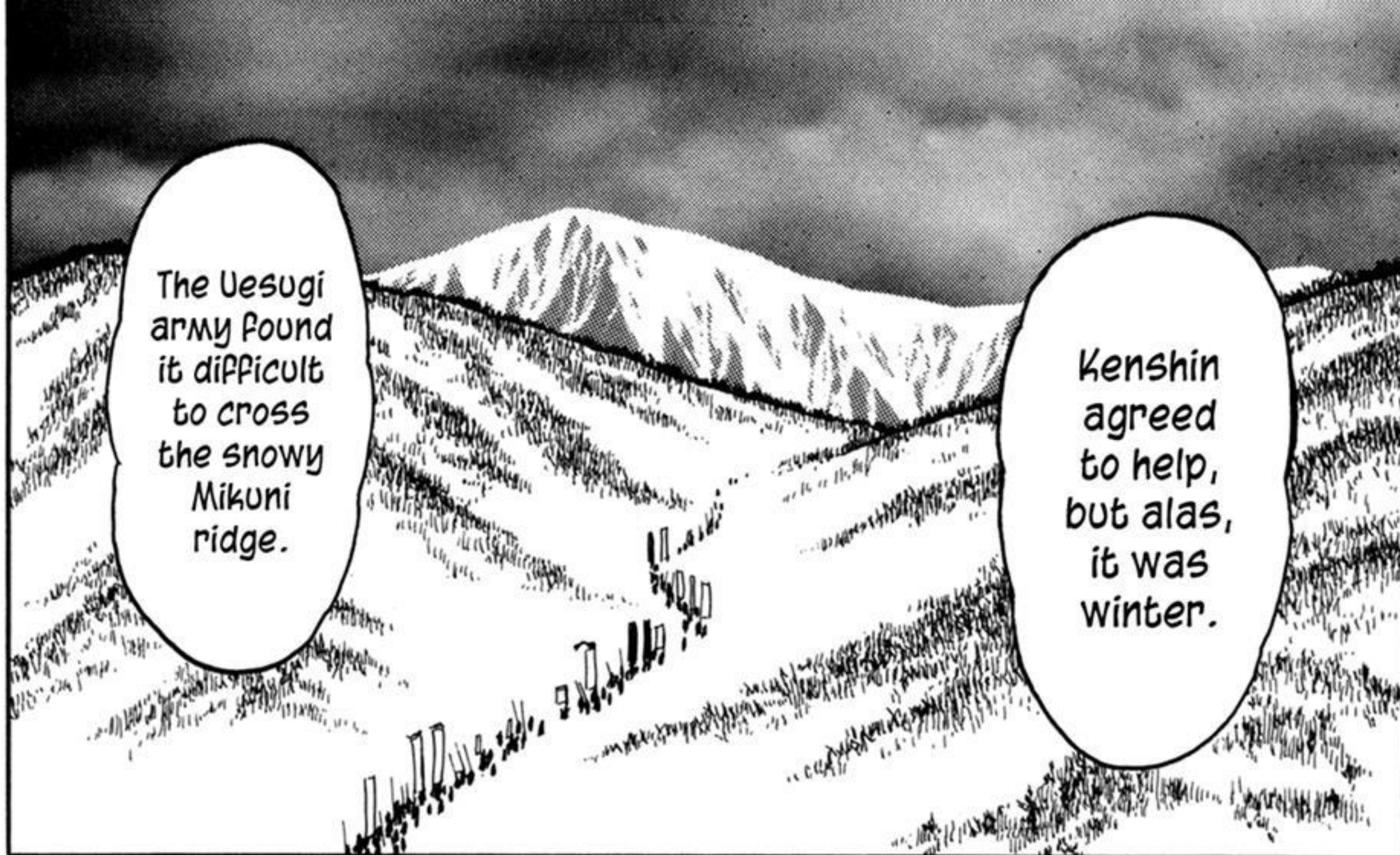


Seeing no alternate option, my father sent an urgent request for aid from the Daimyo of Echigo: Uesugi Kenshin.

With such overwhelming numbers, it was almost impossible to even approach the castle, let alone save it.

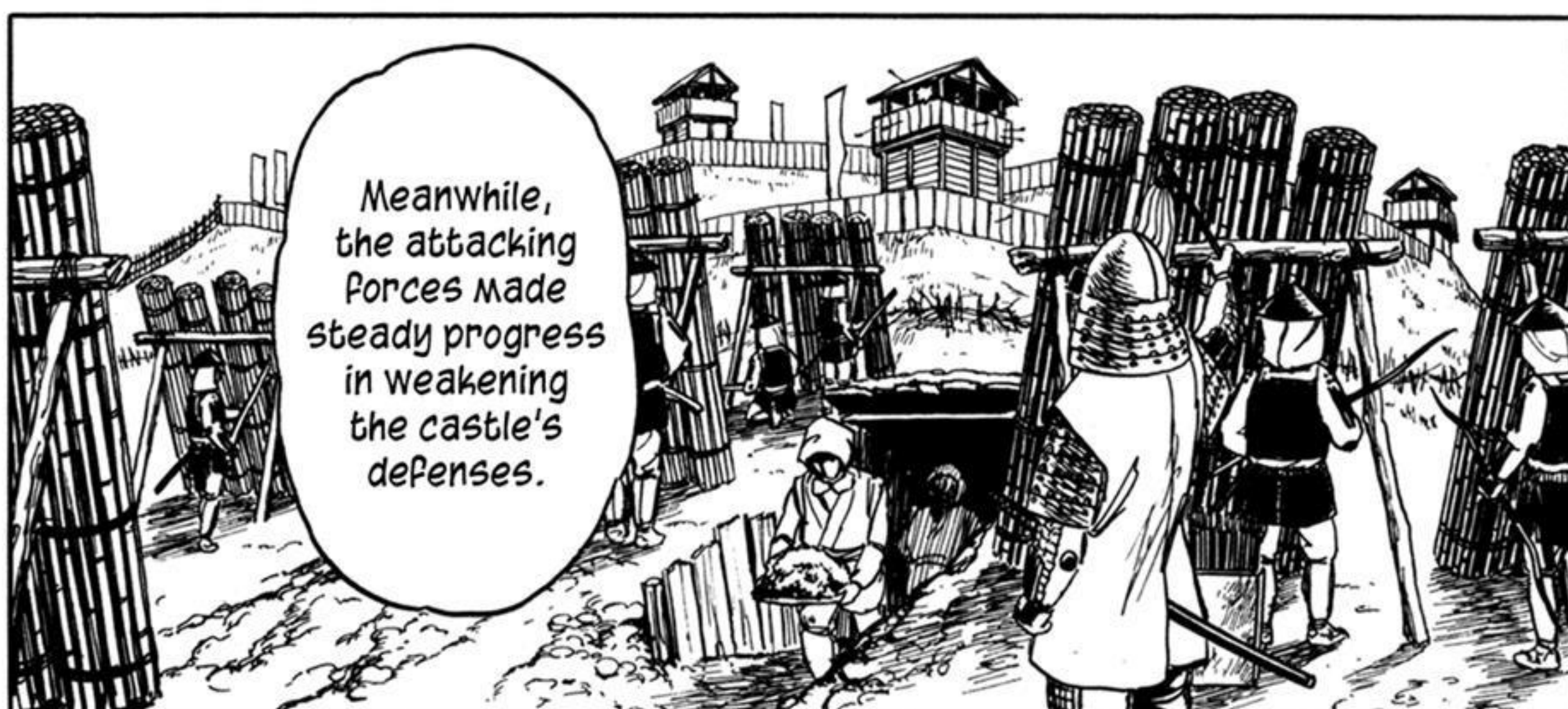
Their number... 55,000!





The Uesugi army found it difficult to cross the snowy Mikuni ridge.

Kenshin agreed to help, but alas, it was winter.



Meanwhile, the attacking forces made steady progress in weakening the castle's defenses.



Kenshin and his army had crossed the ridge and finally arrived!

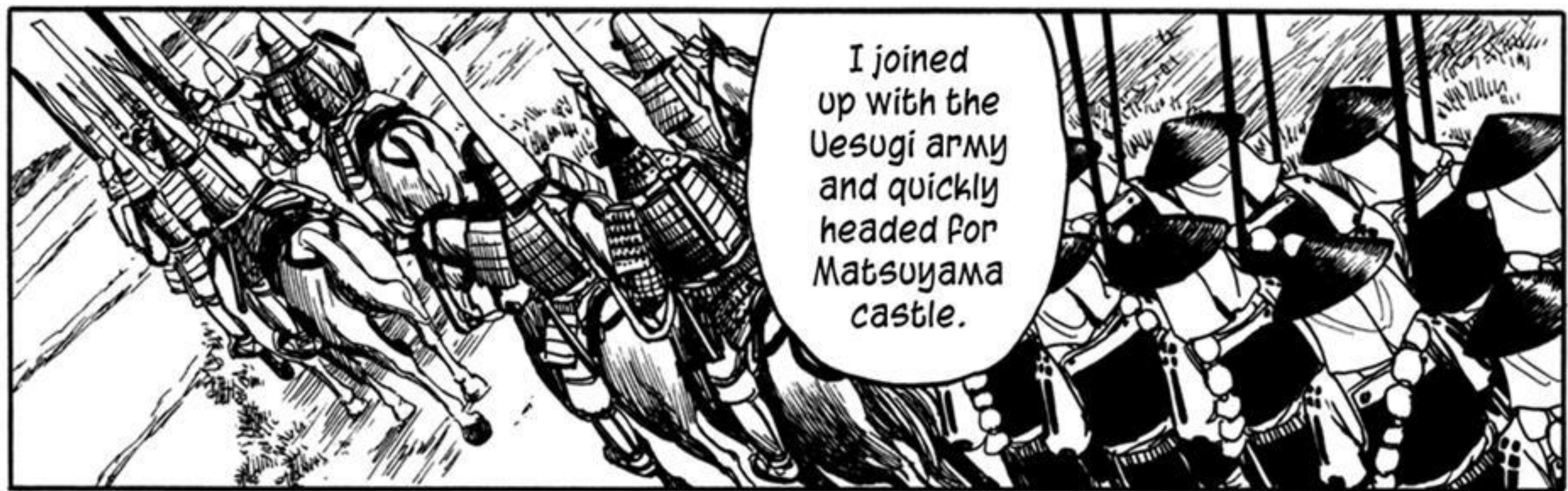


Mining underground to destroy watch-towers, cutting off the water supply, and other standard siege operations... Just when the garrison's food supply was exhausted,



You did well
to withstand the
enemy until now.
Just half a day's
march more and
we shall arrive!

Uesugi
Kenshin



I joined
up with the
Uesugi army
and quickly
headed for
Matsuyama
castle.



...



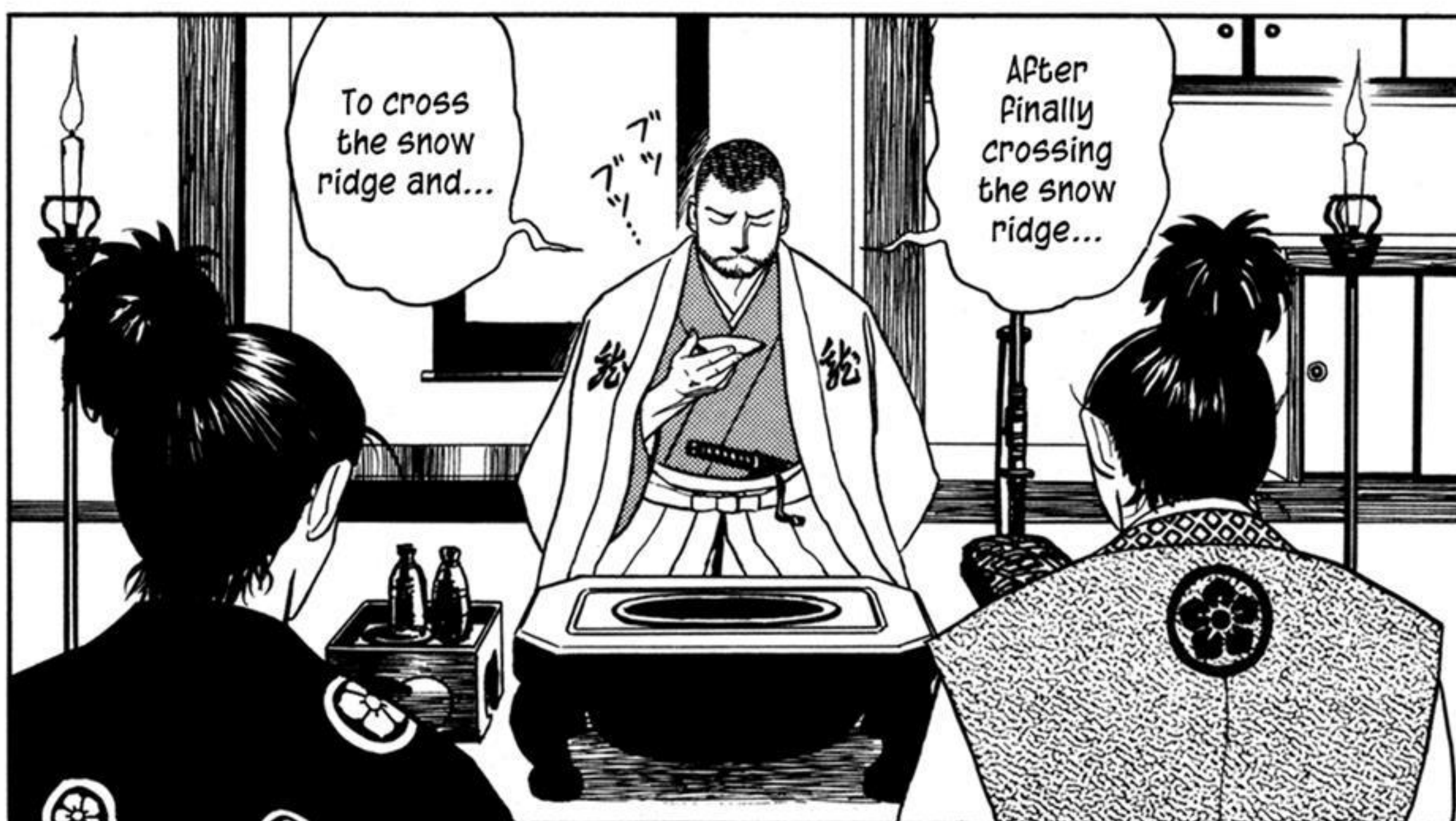
It
can't
be...



I
bring an
urgent
report!

But a
mere two
li away
from the
castle...

*One li is roughly 3.9 kilometers.

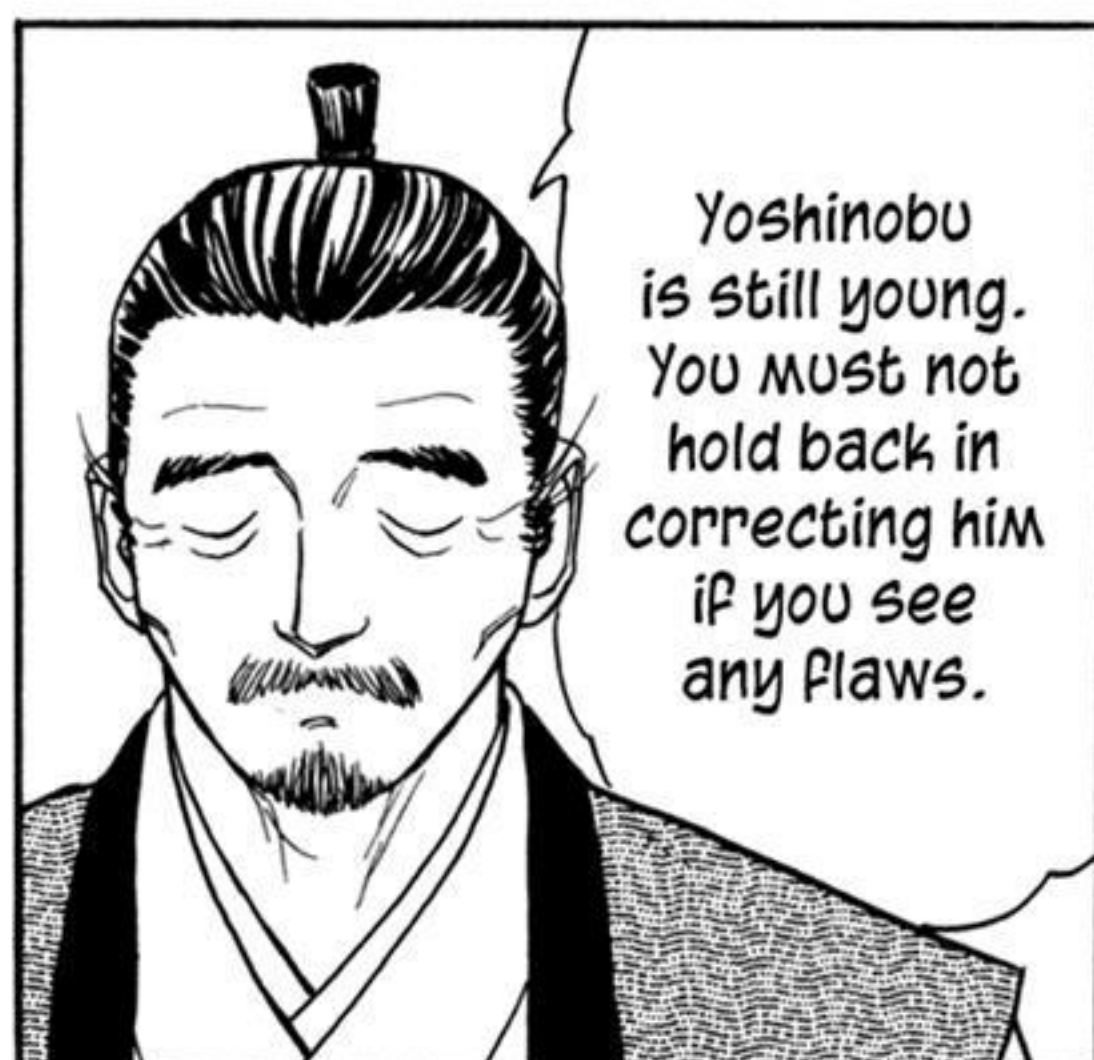
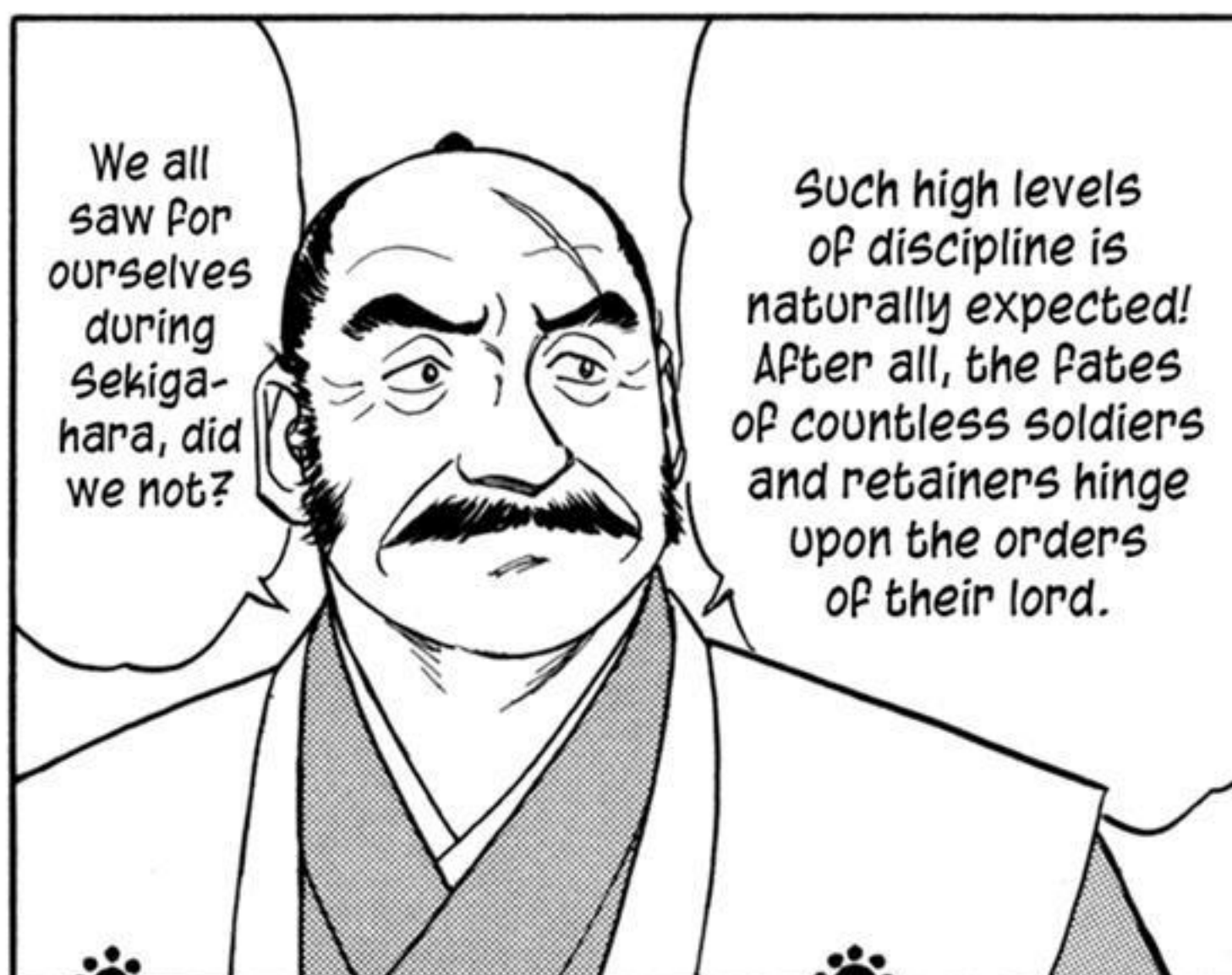




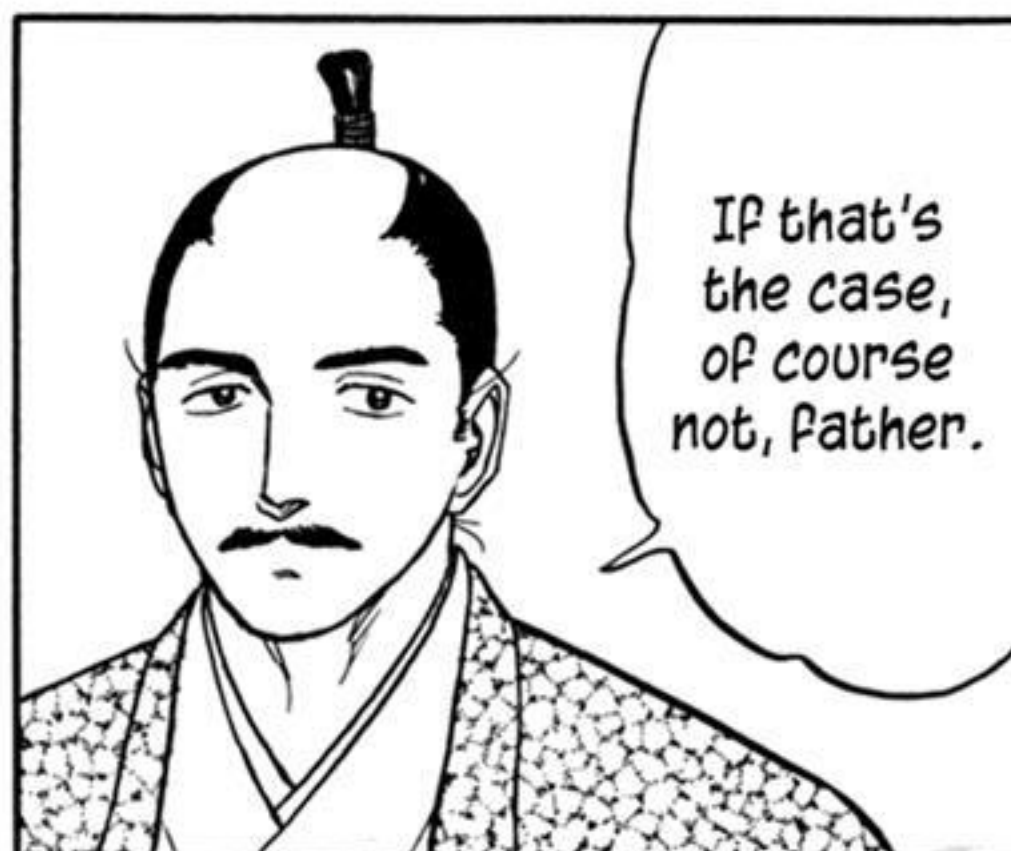


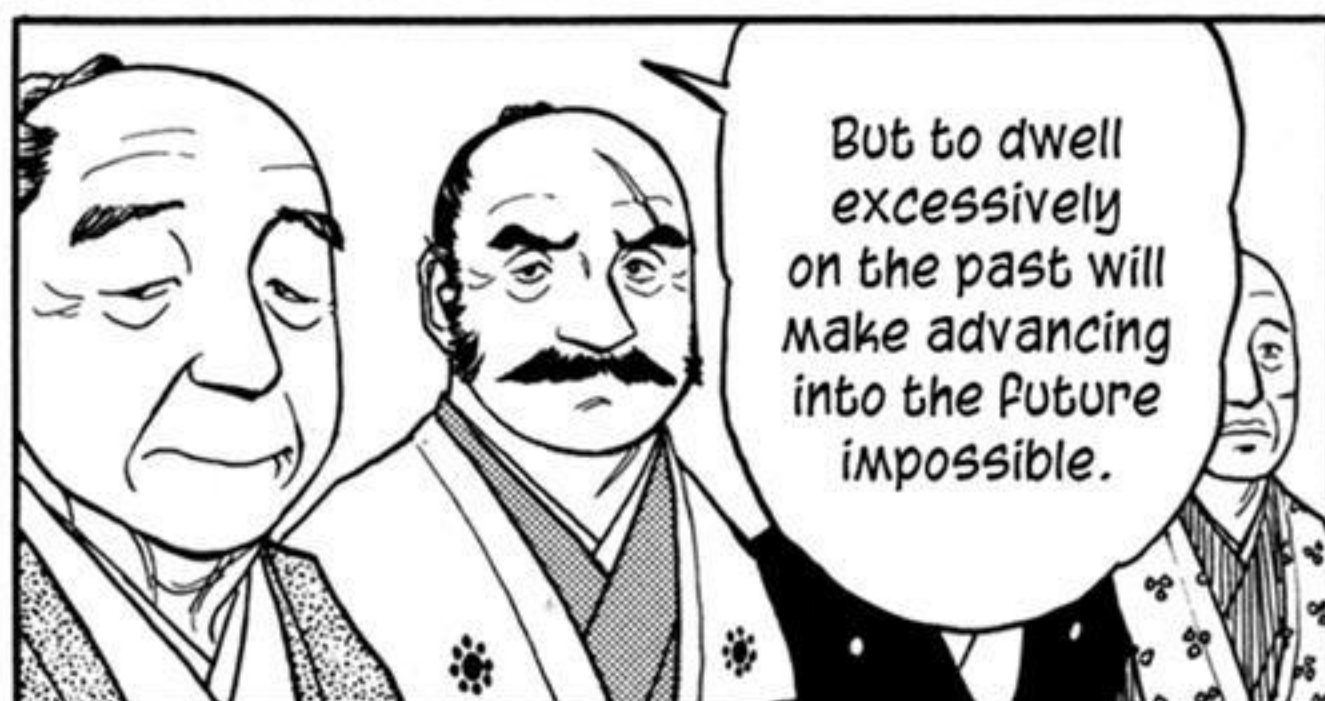




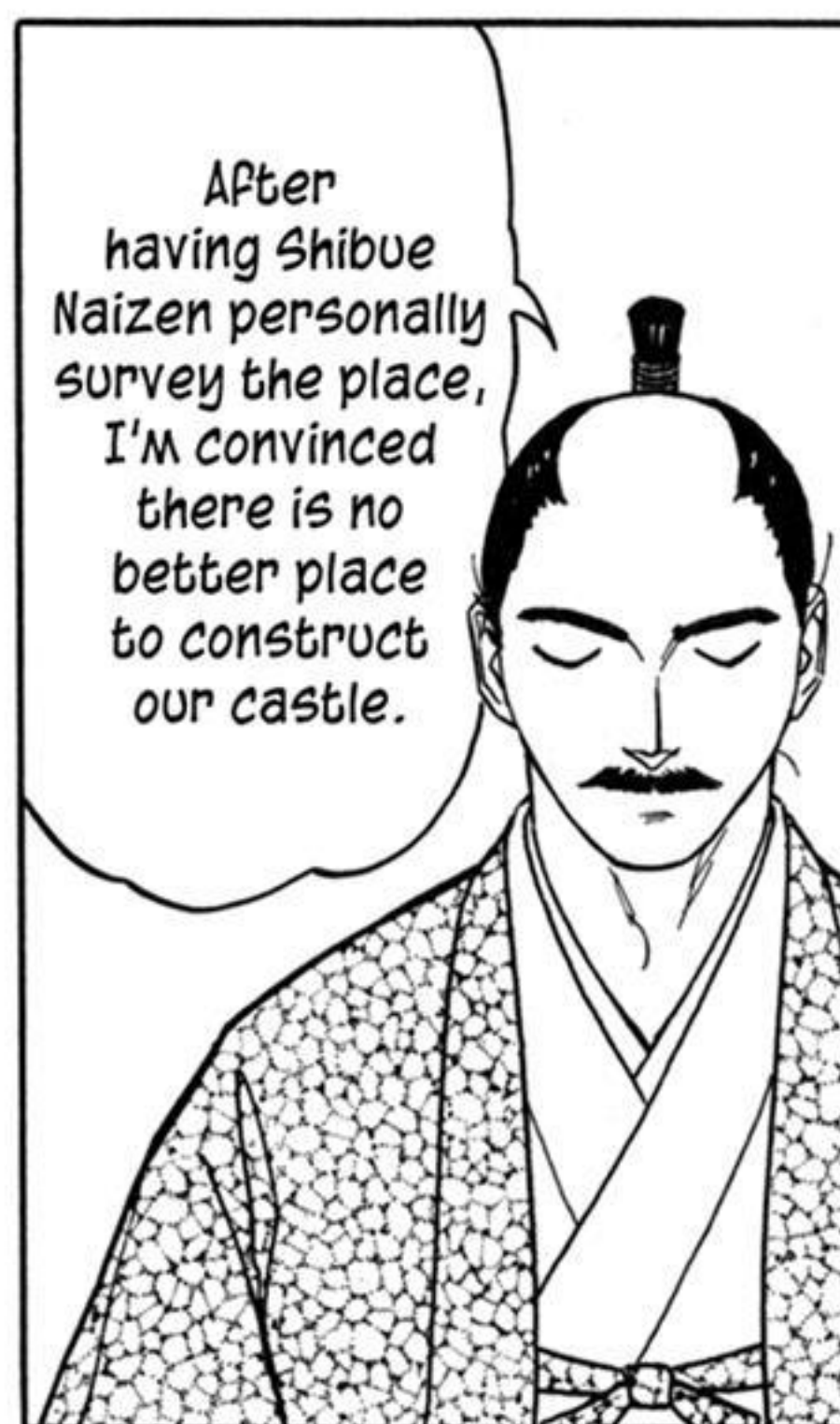
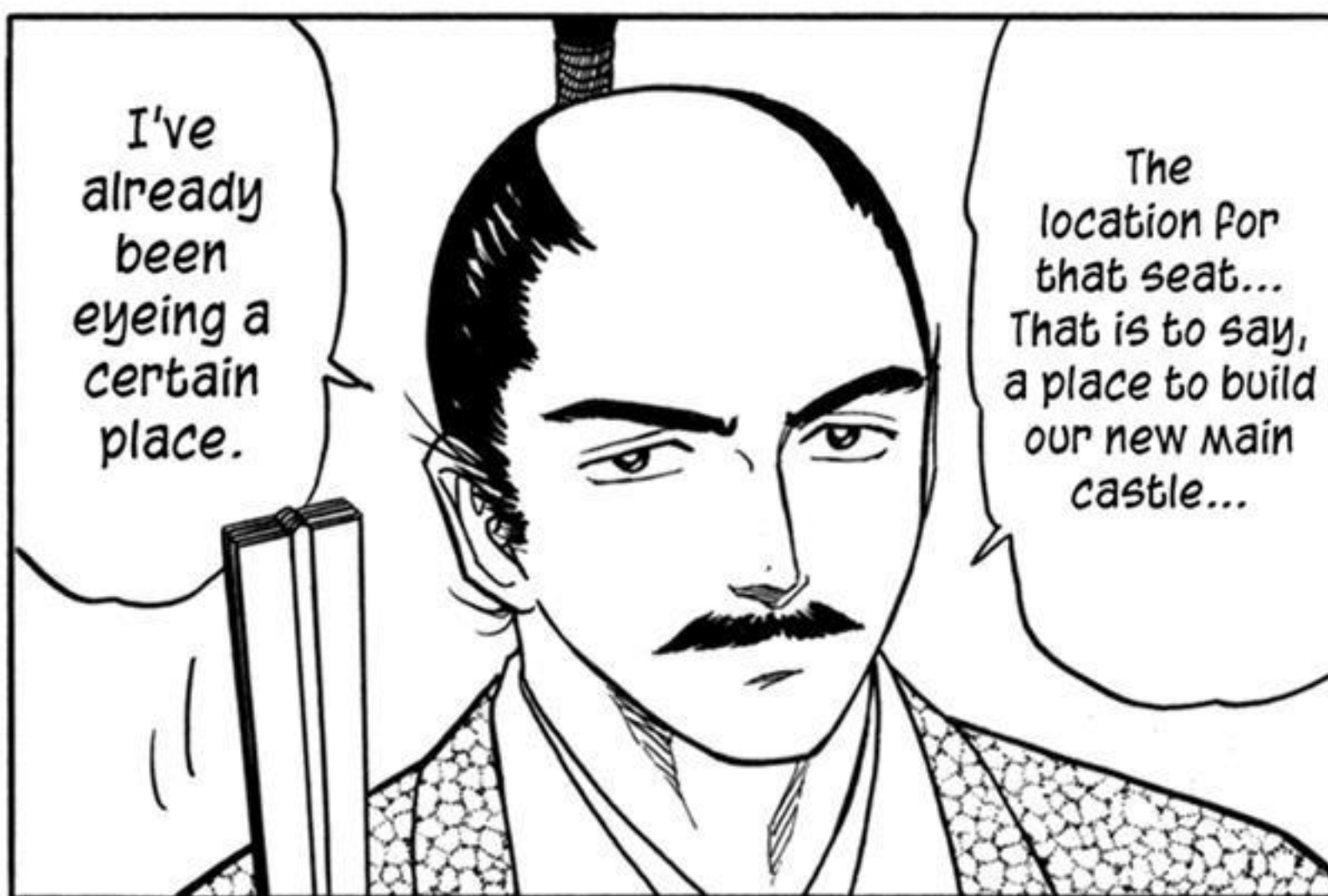


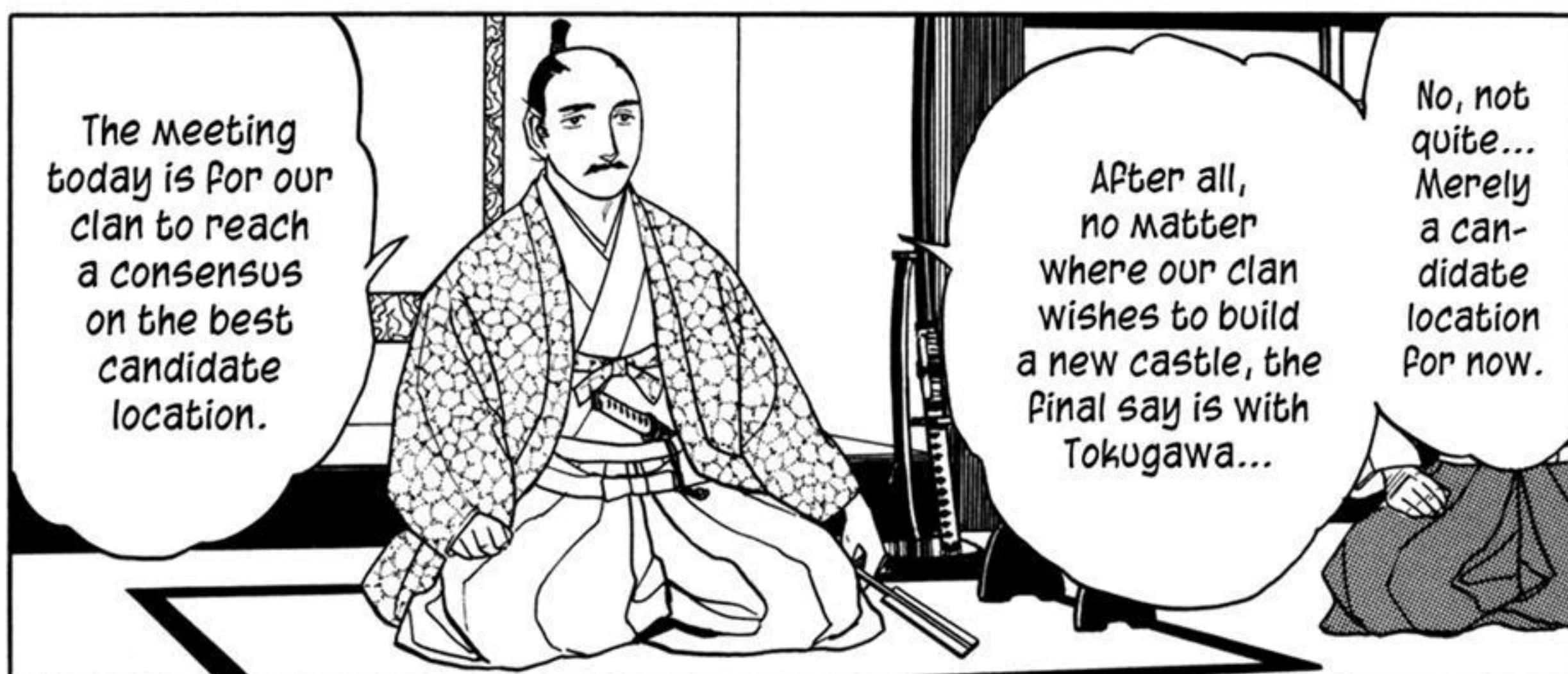
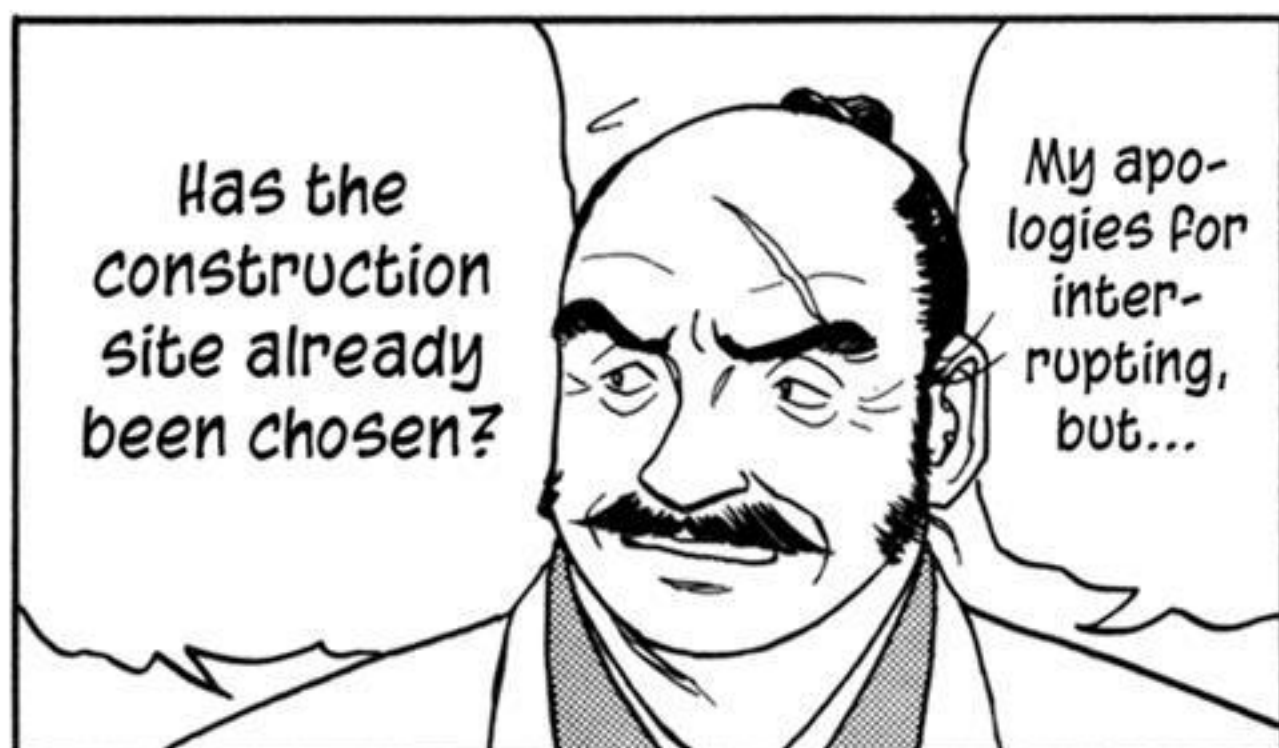


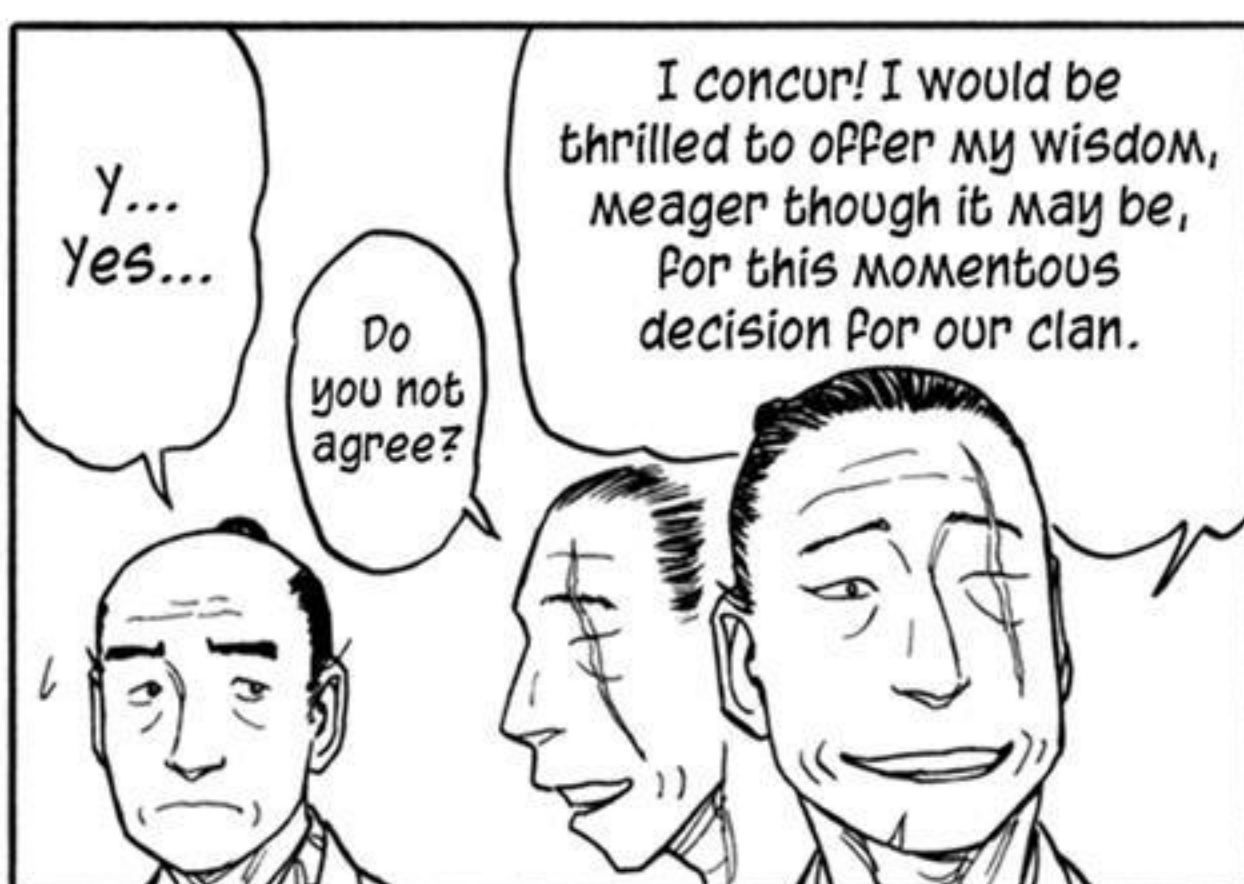


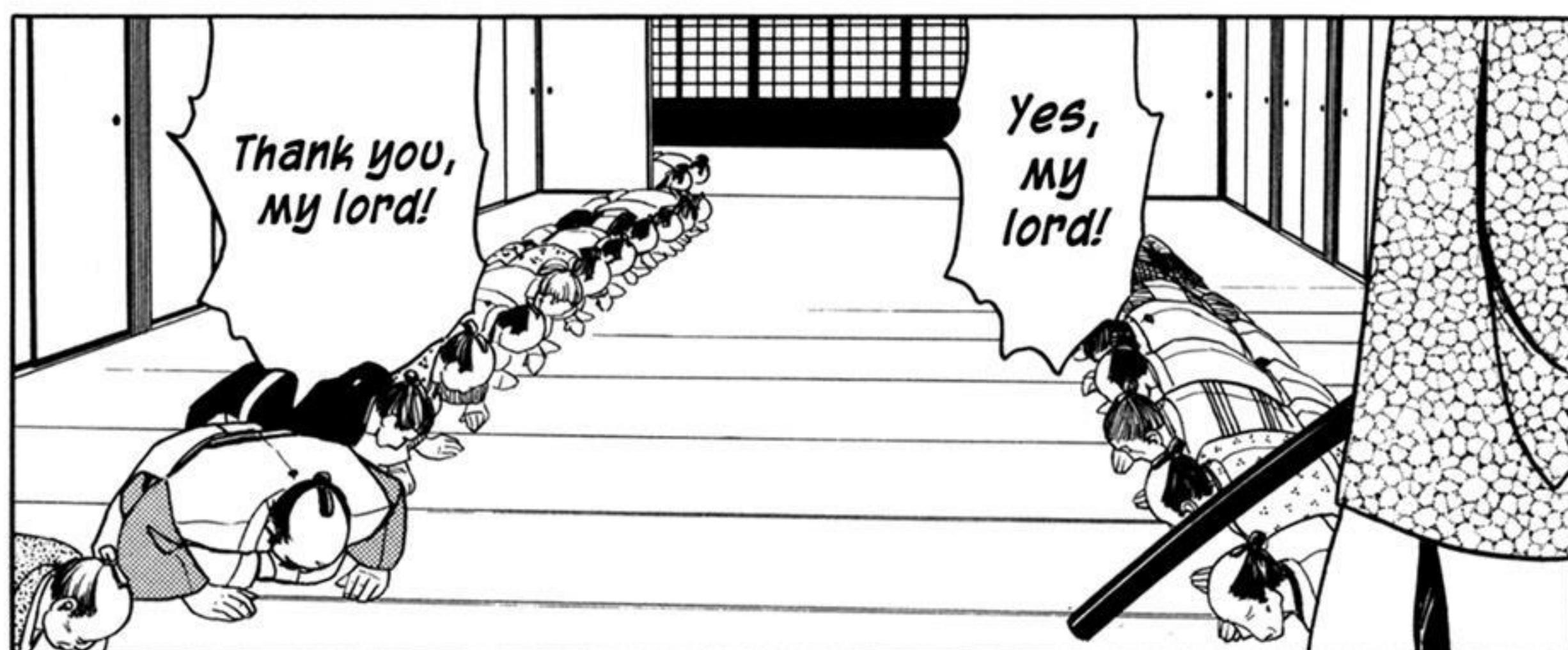


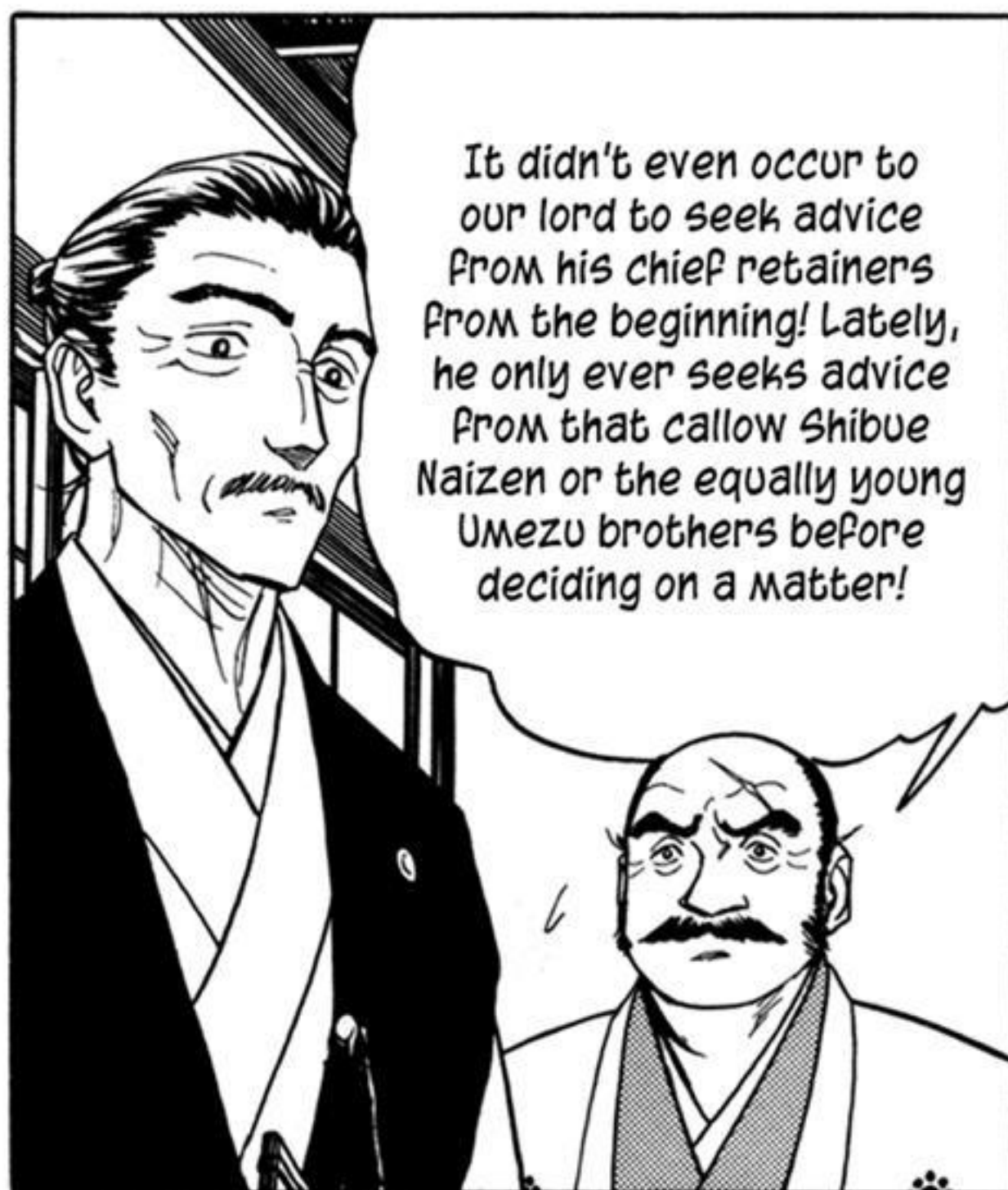


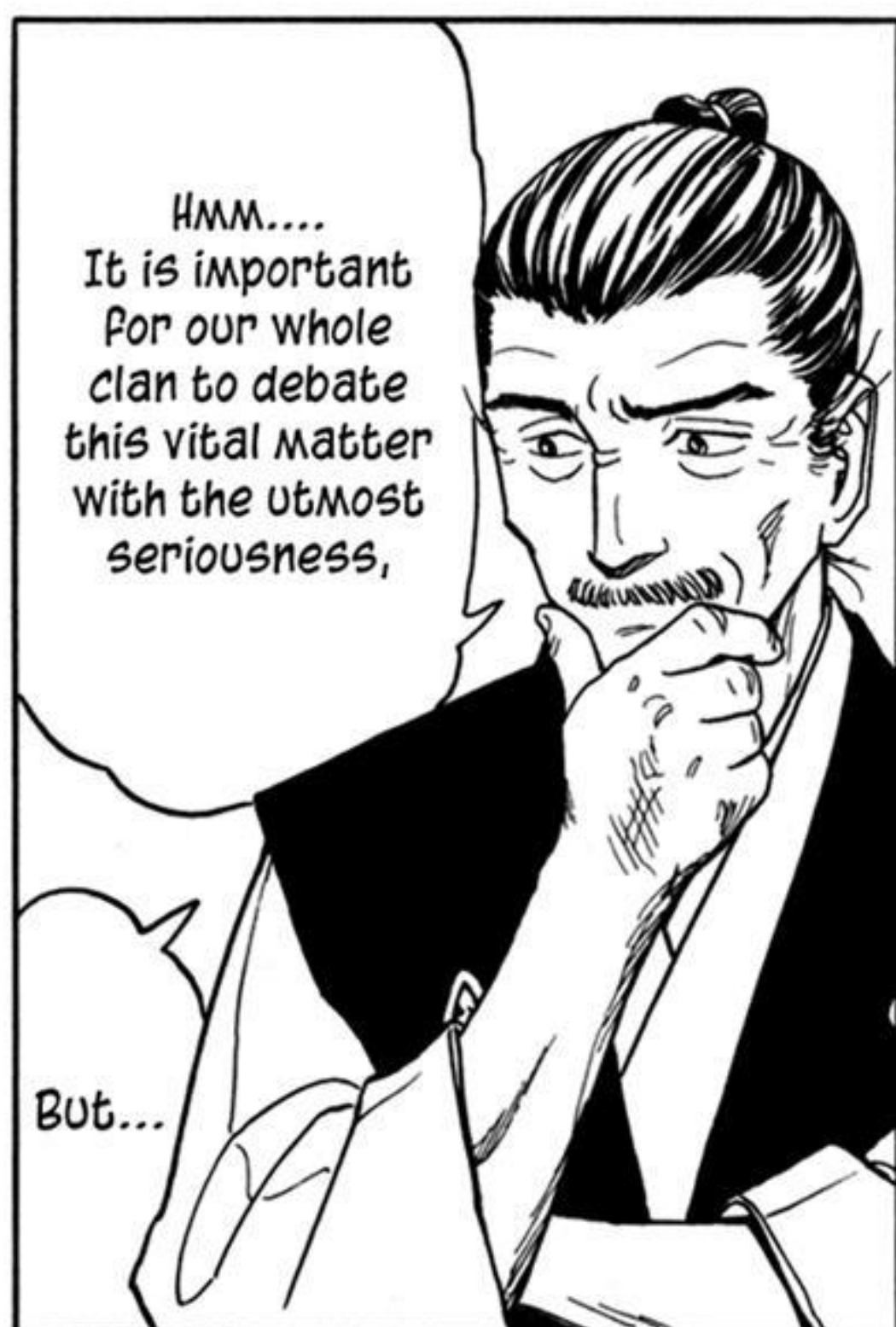




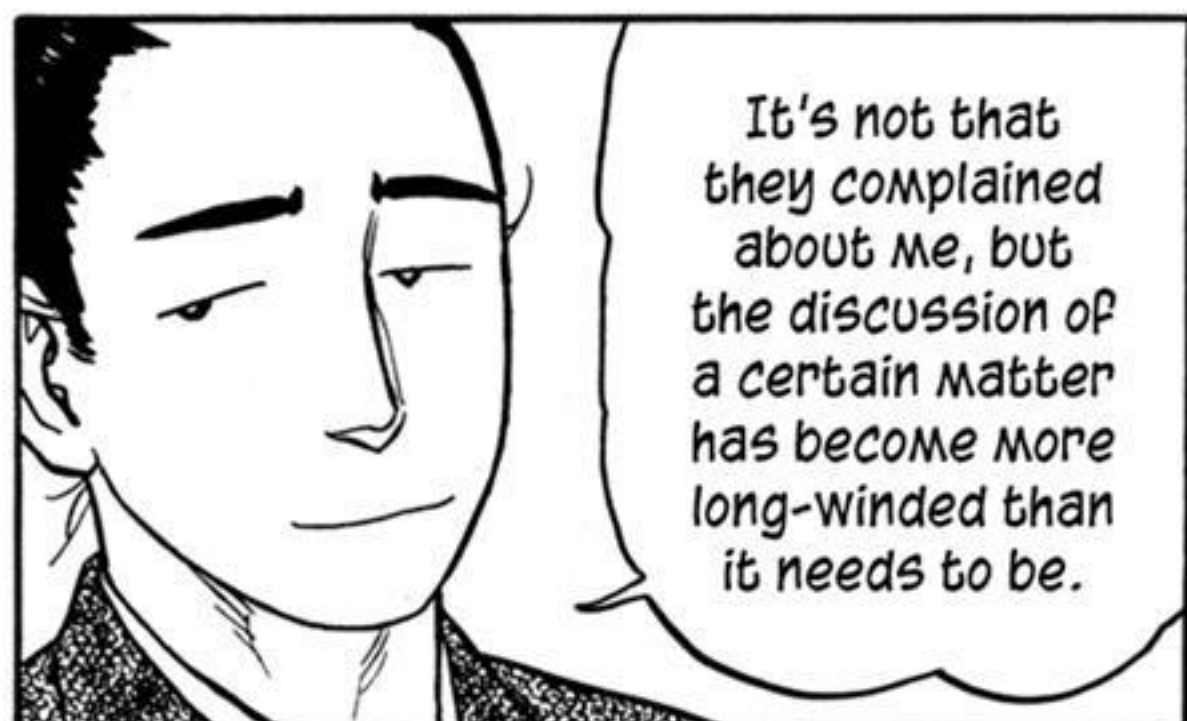
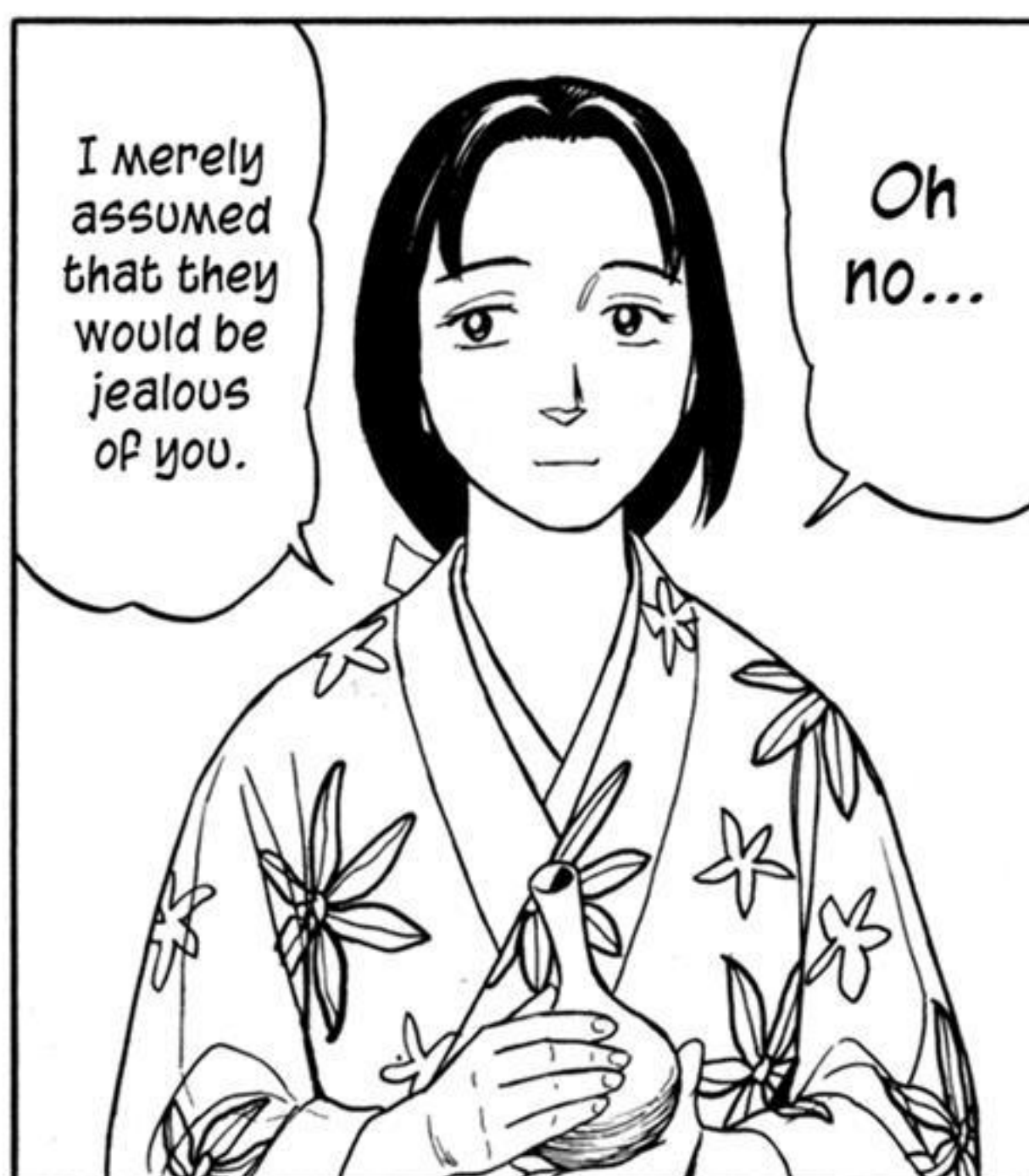


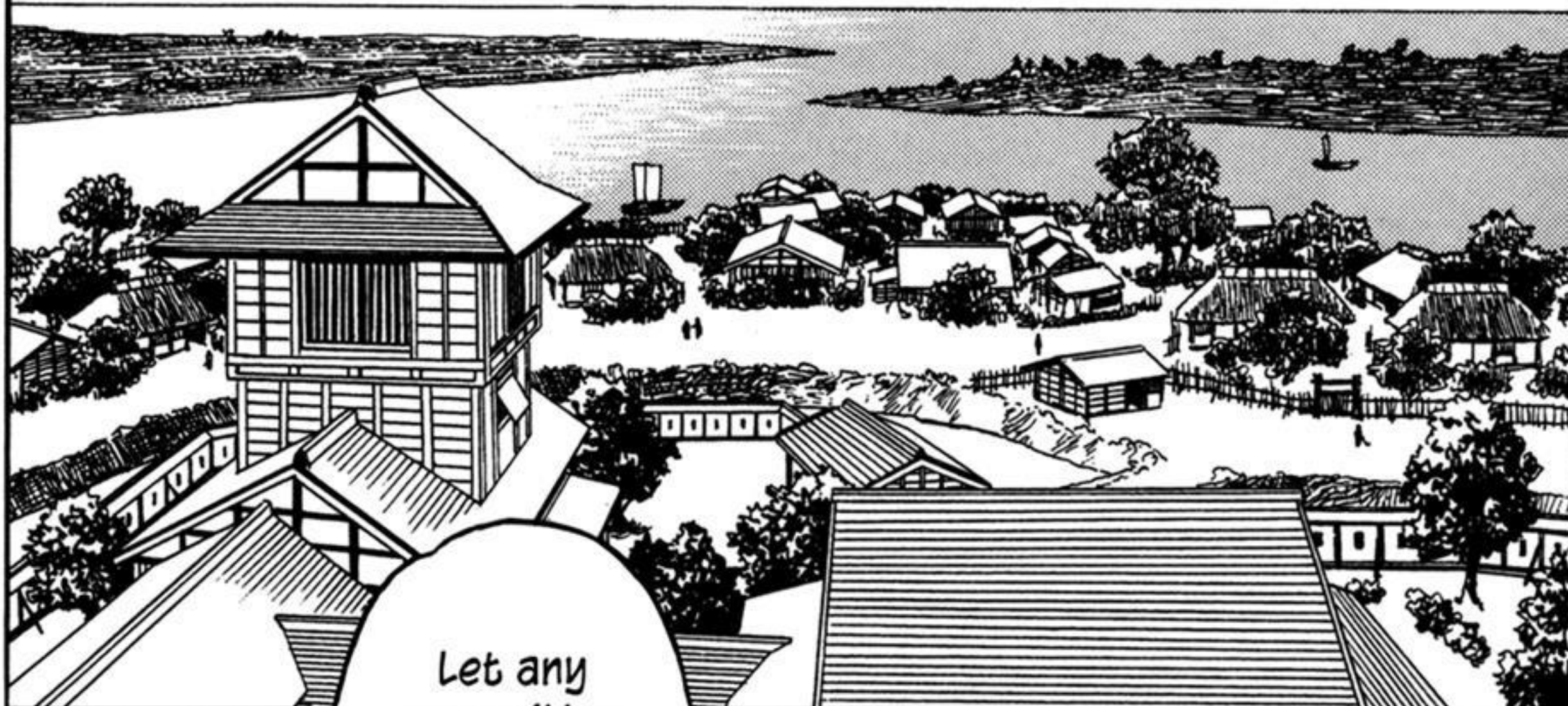










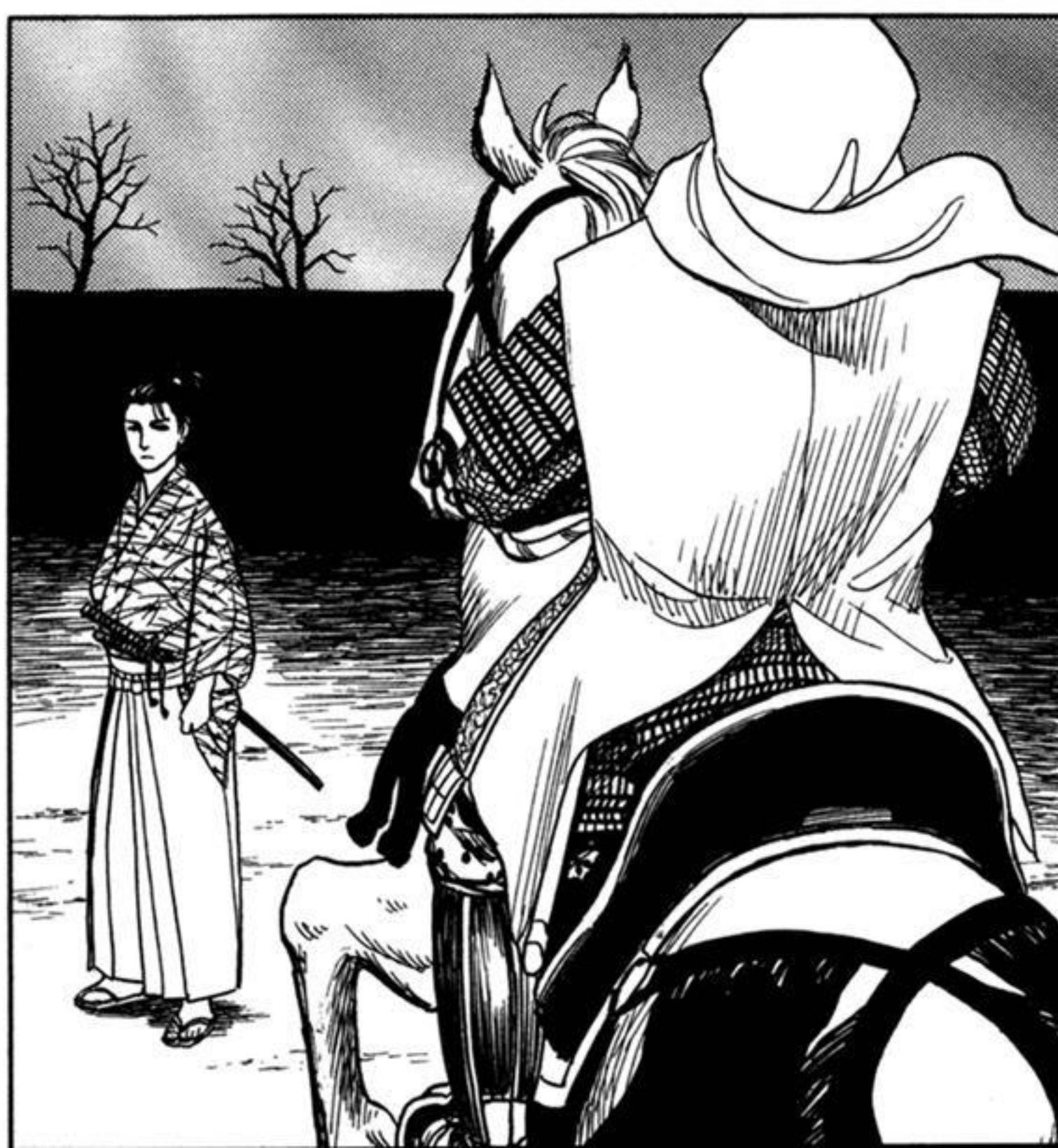
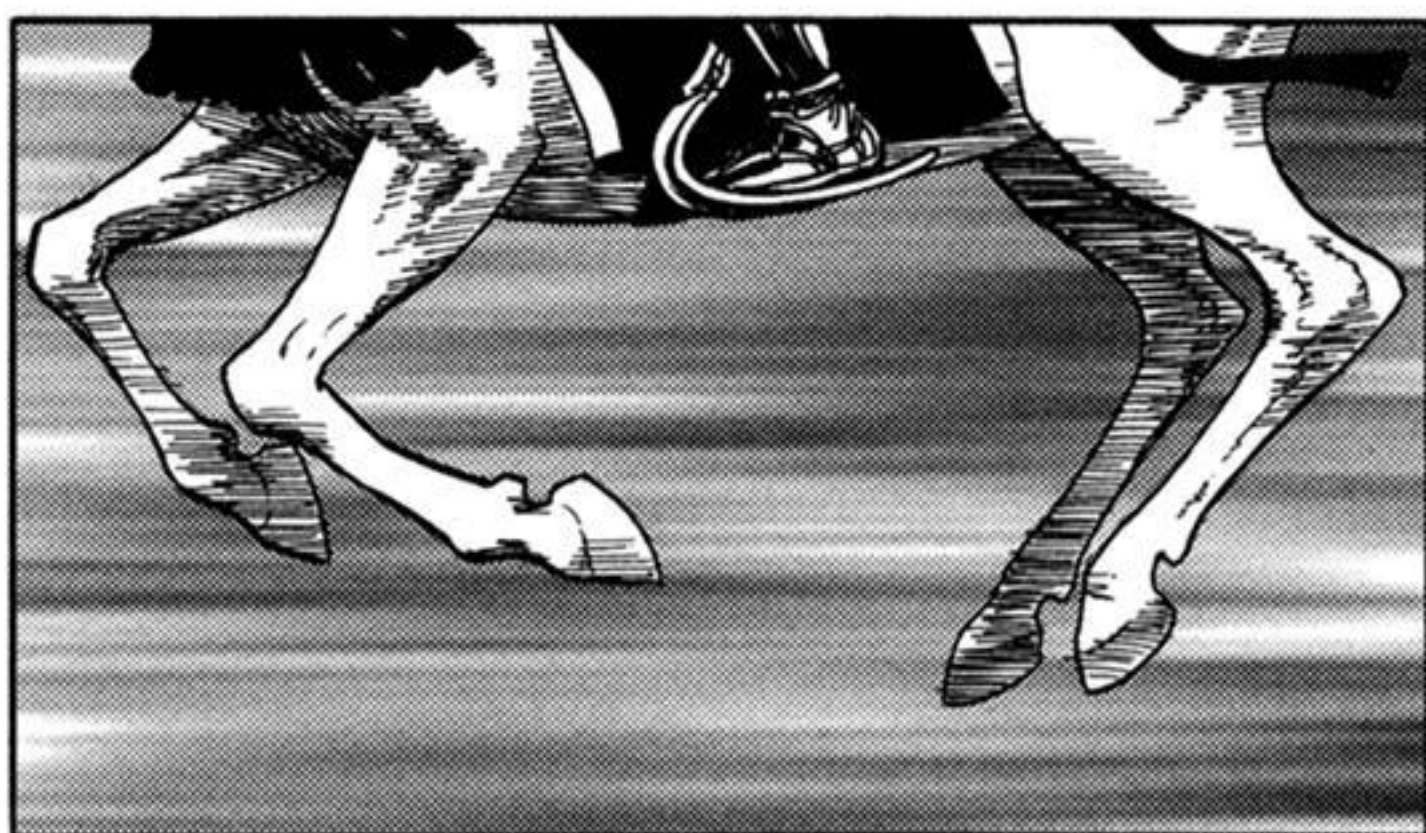


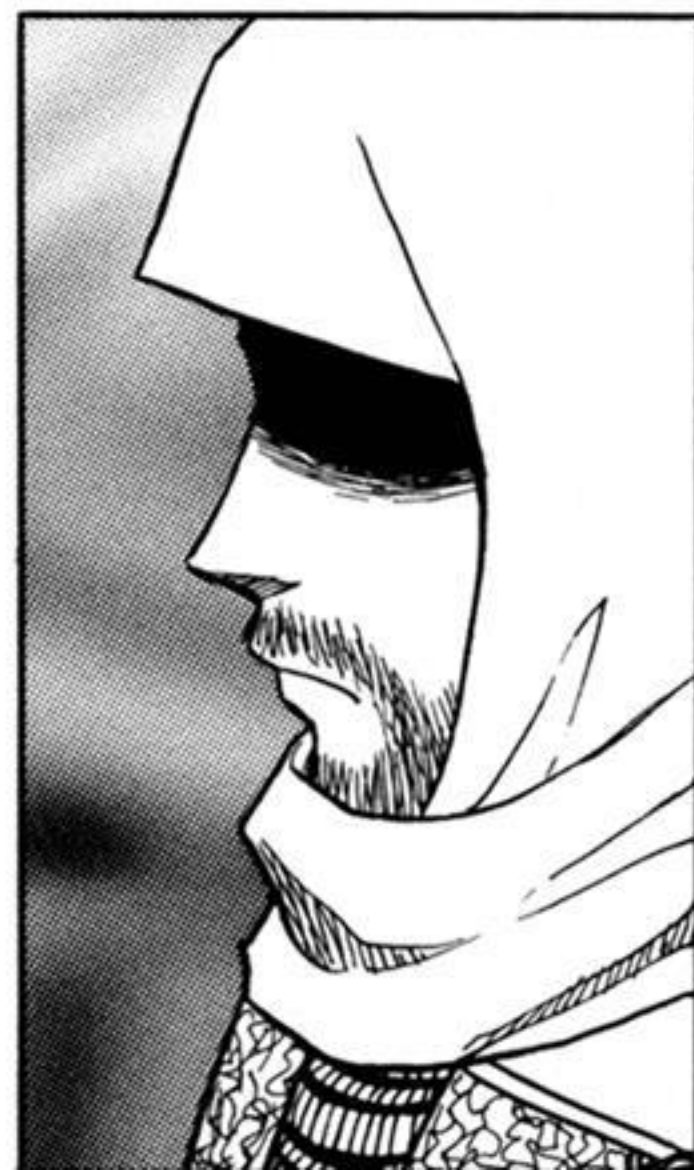
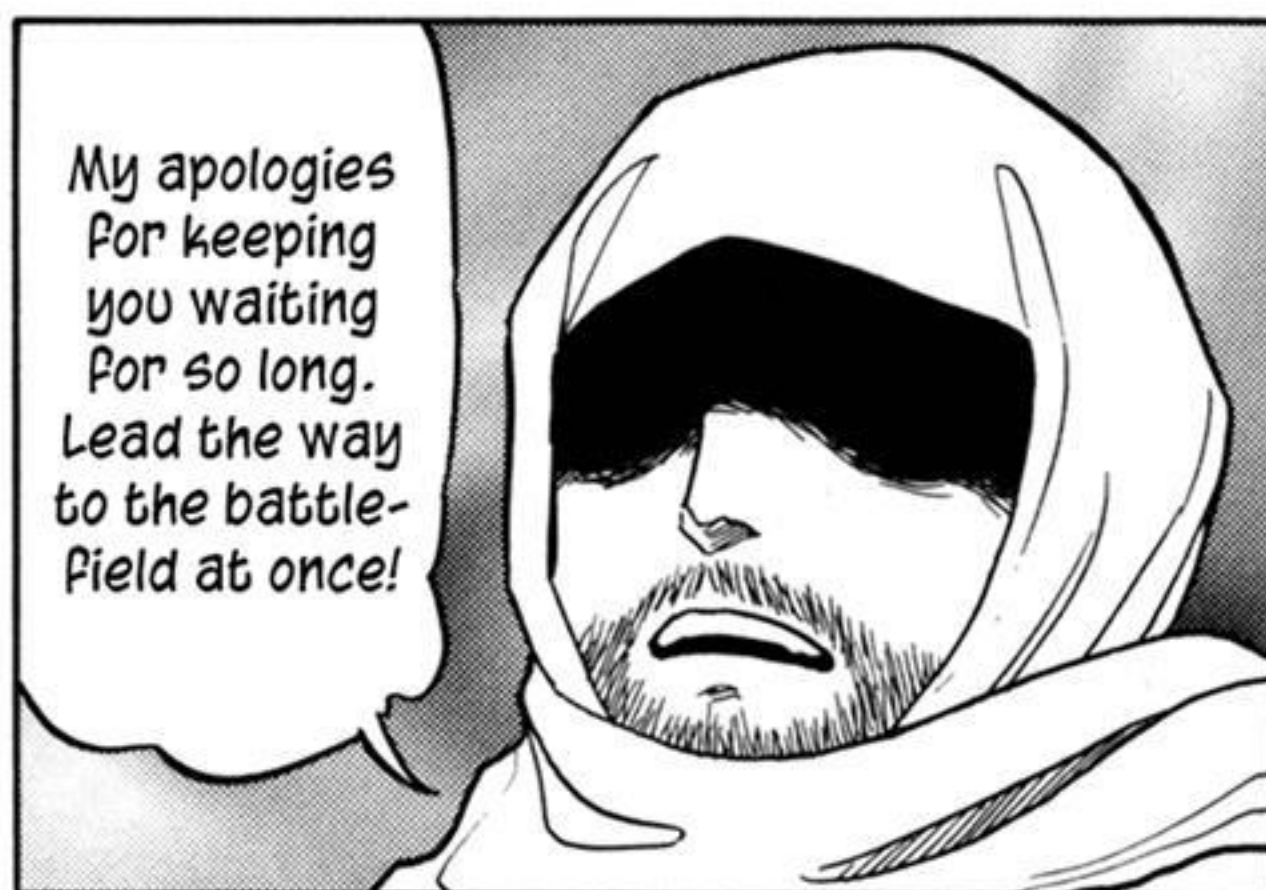
Let any
man with a
location to
state his
opinions
now.



Chapter 2: Eyes of a Falcon









I still
desire
more
battles!

What
are you
speaking
of...



It
can't
be...



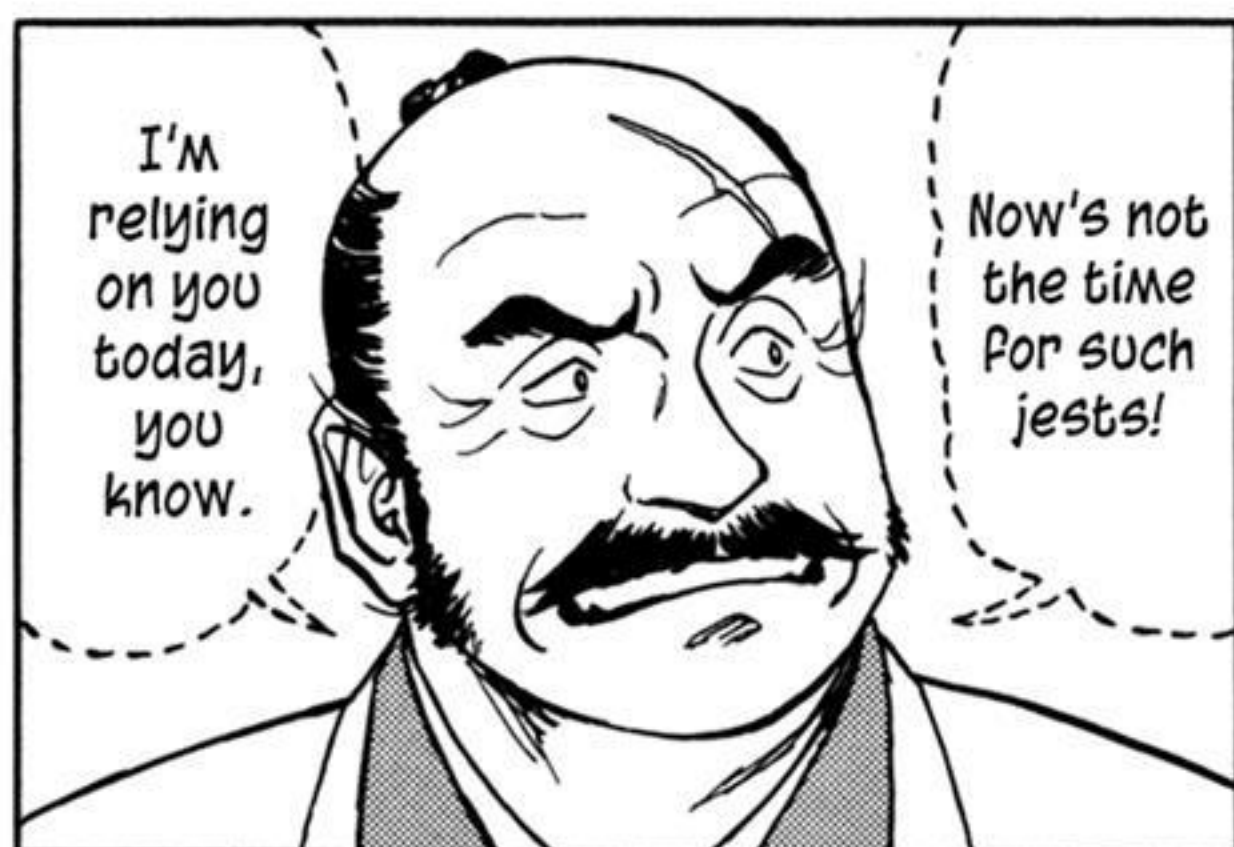
The
war is
already
over...

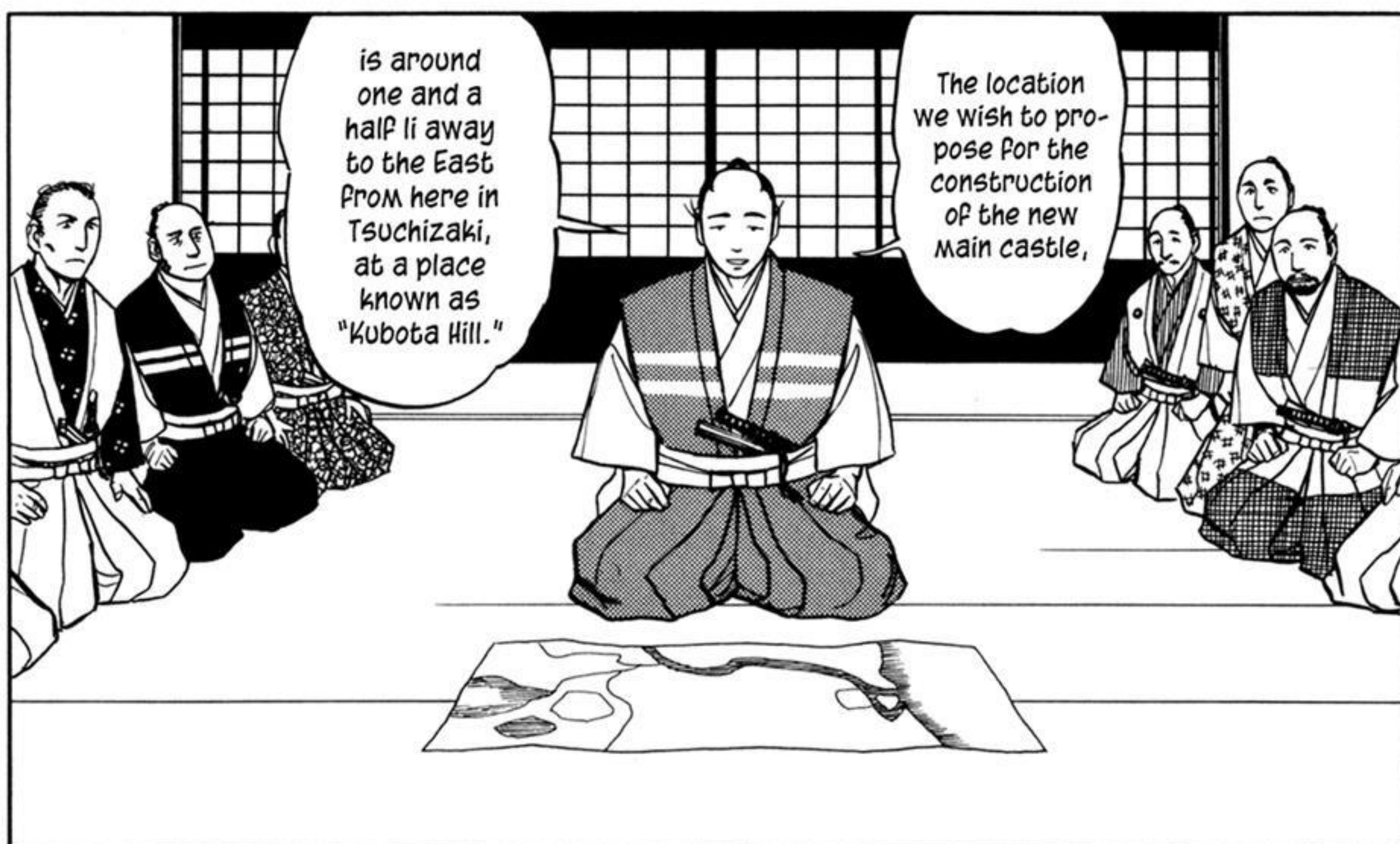
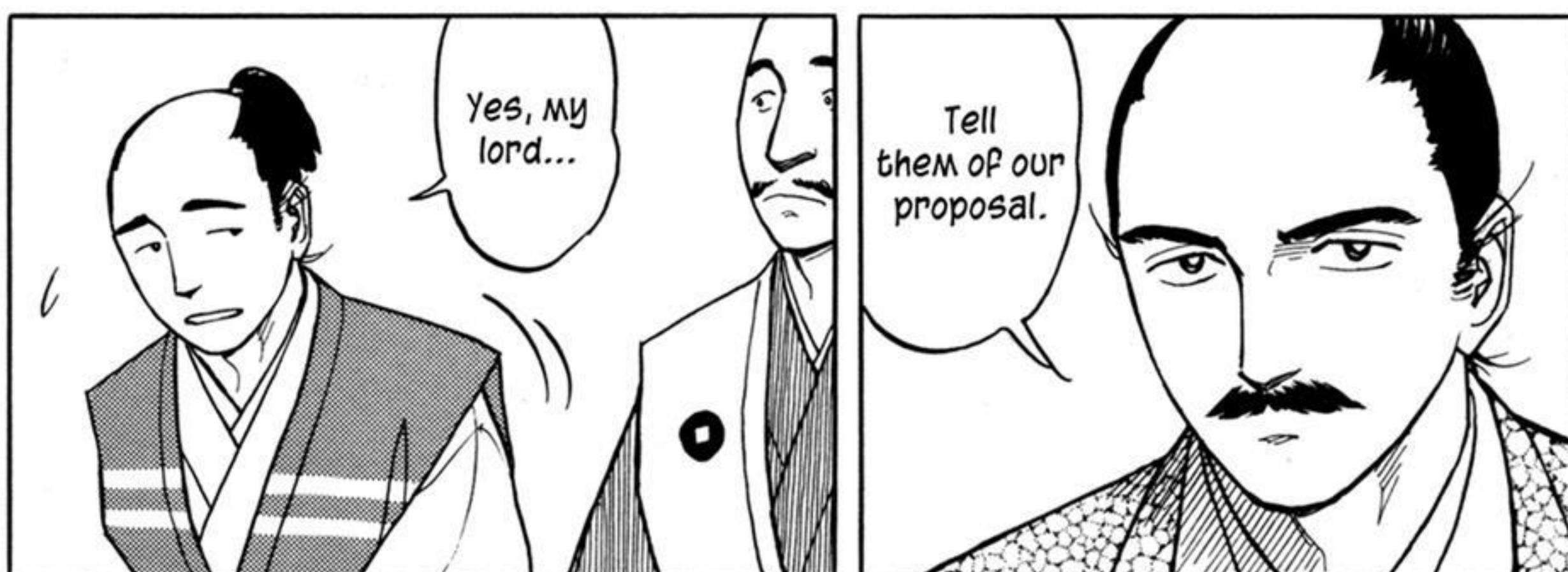
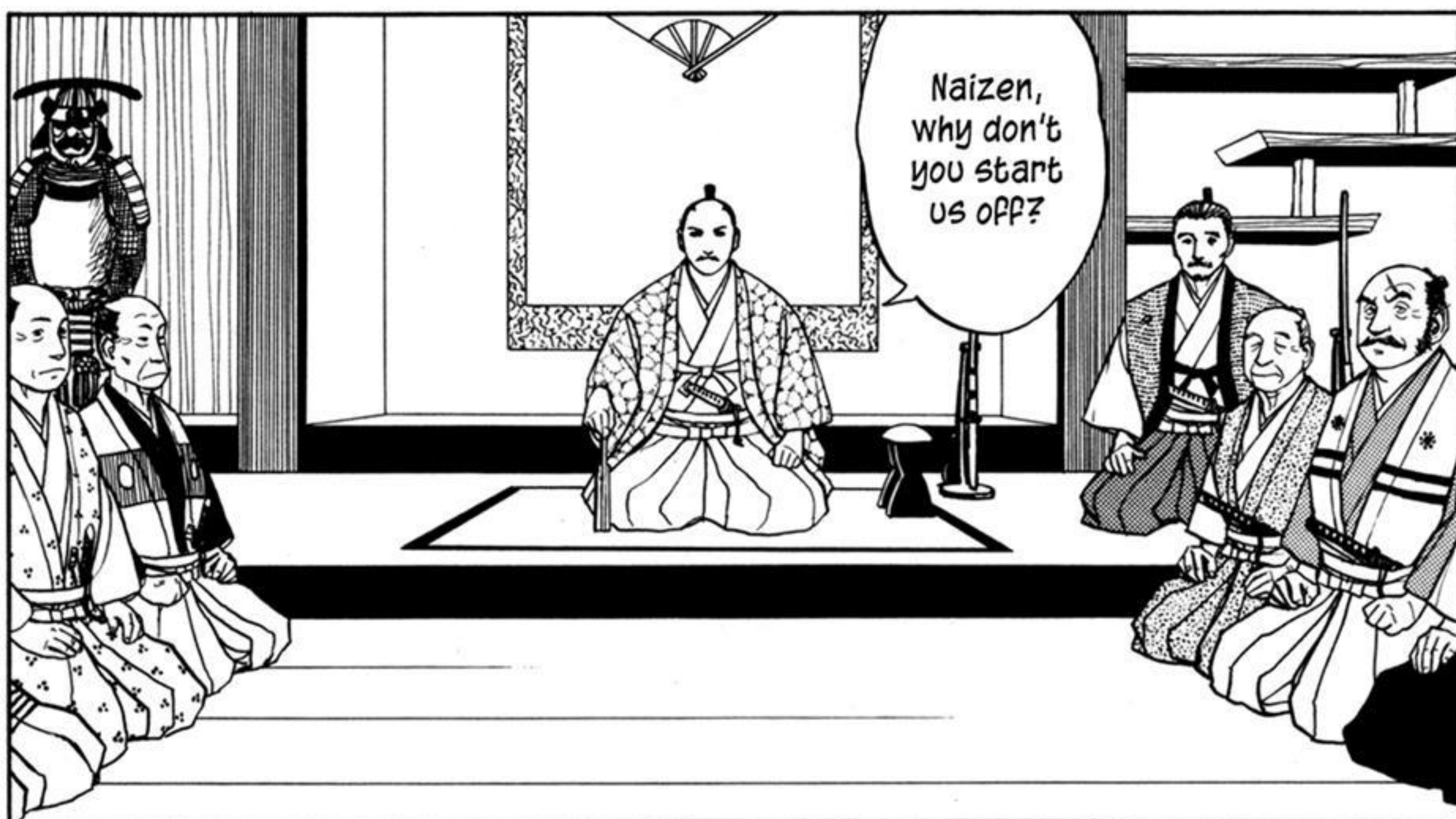
It's
all
over!

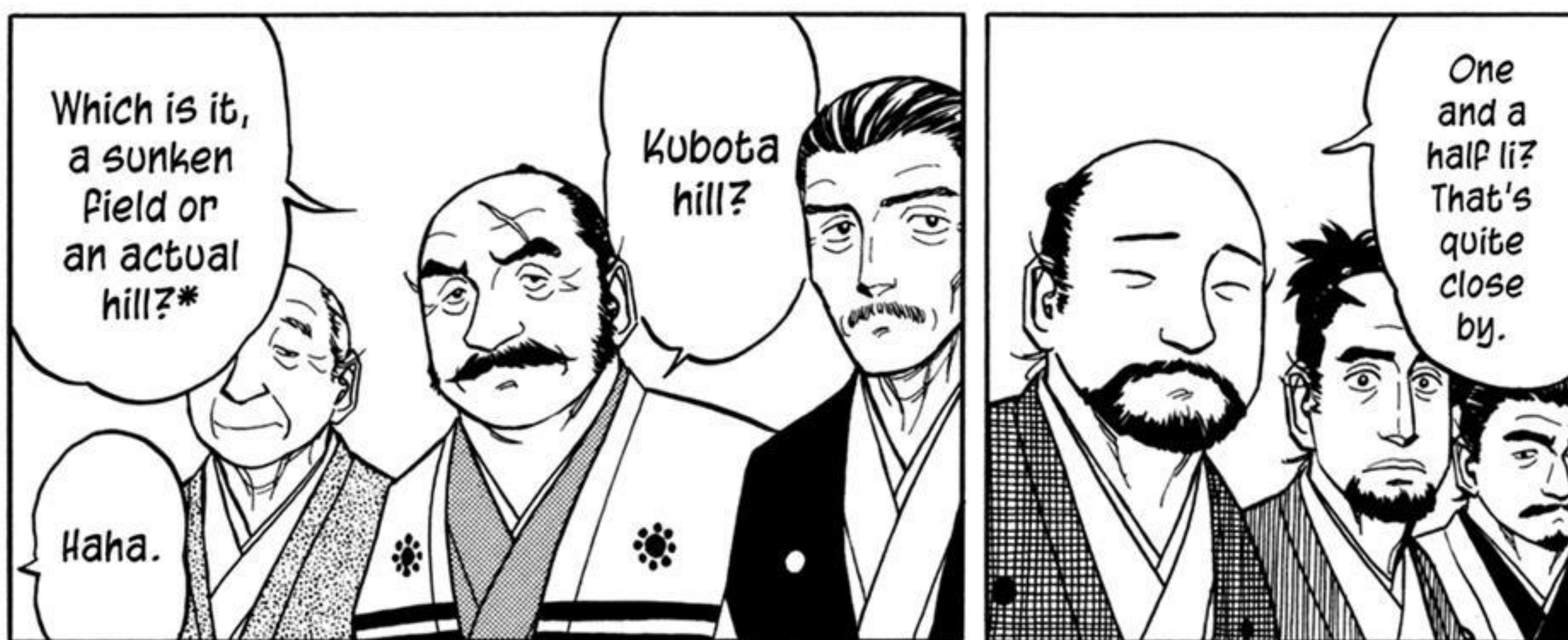


Not after
I finally
crossed
the snow
ridge...

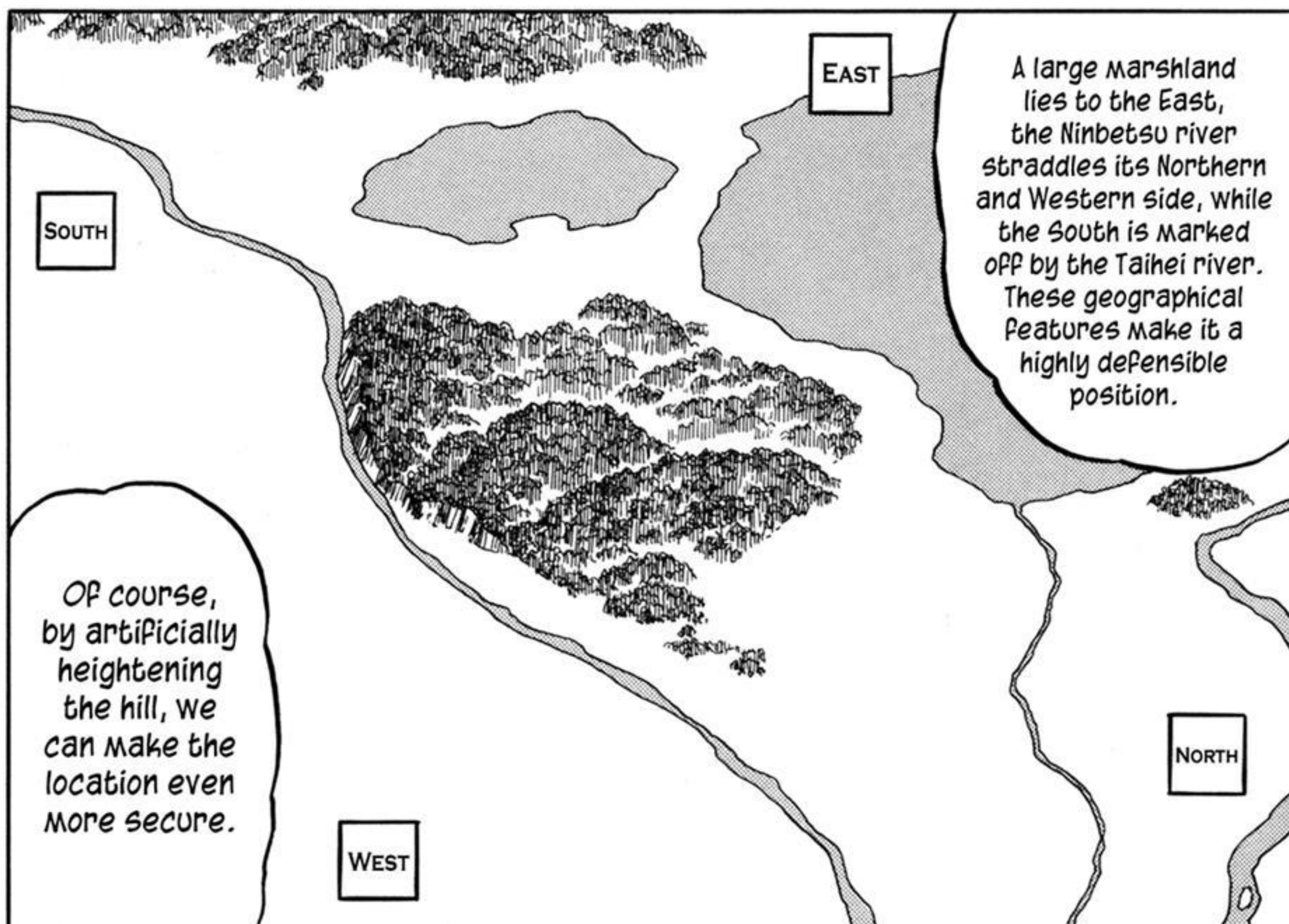
Not
after
I...

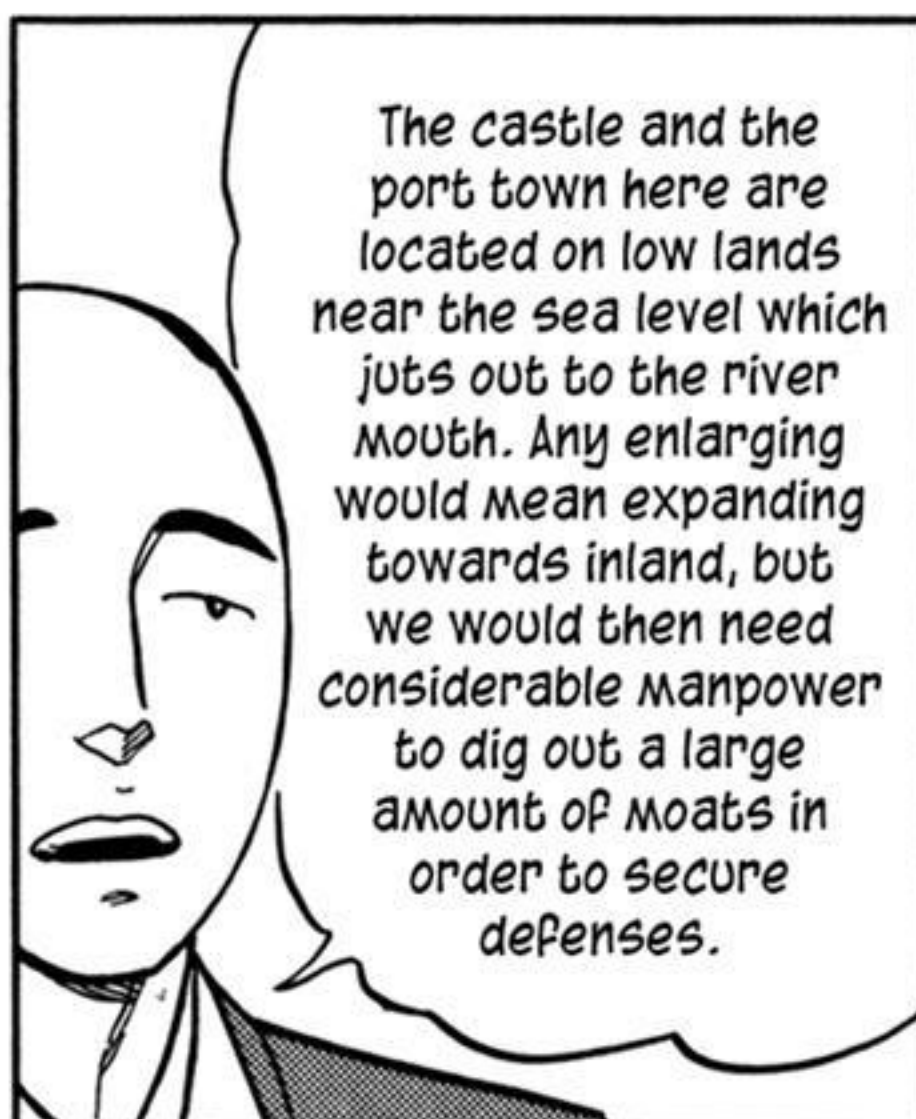
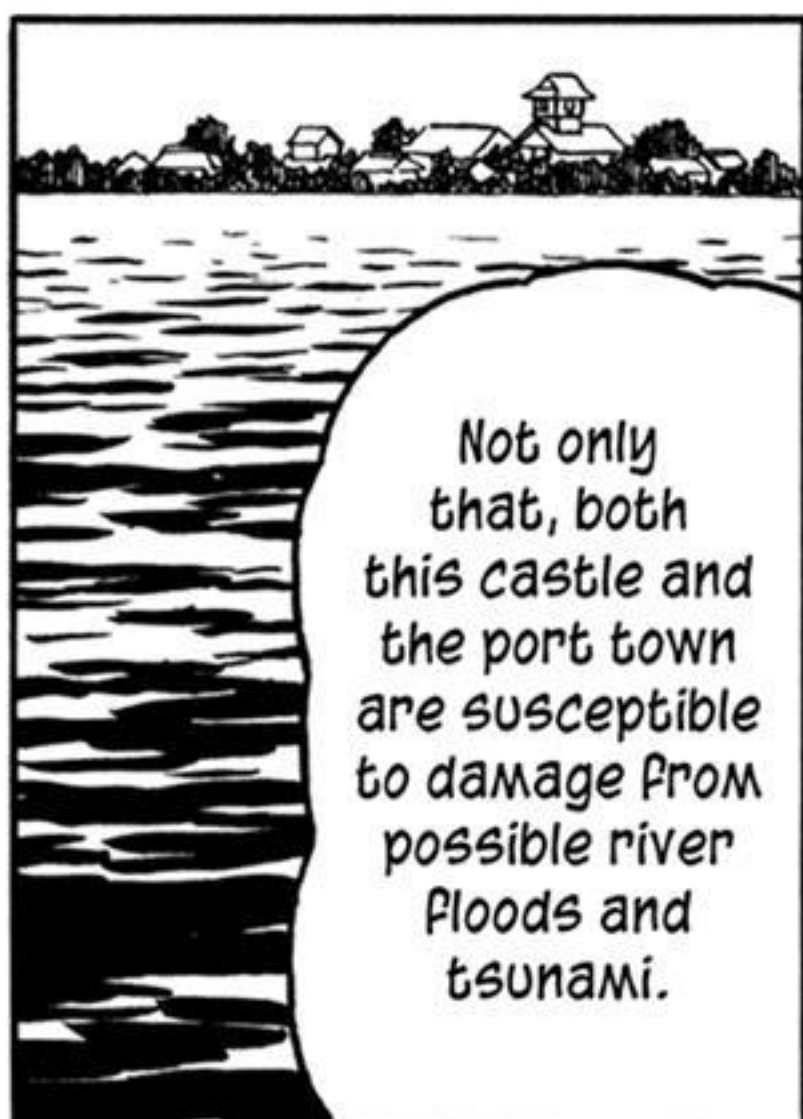
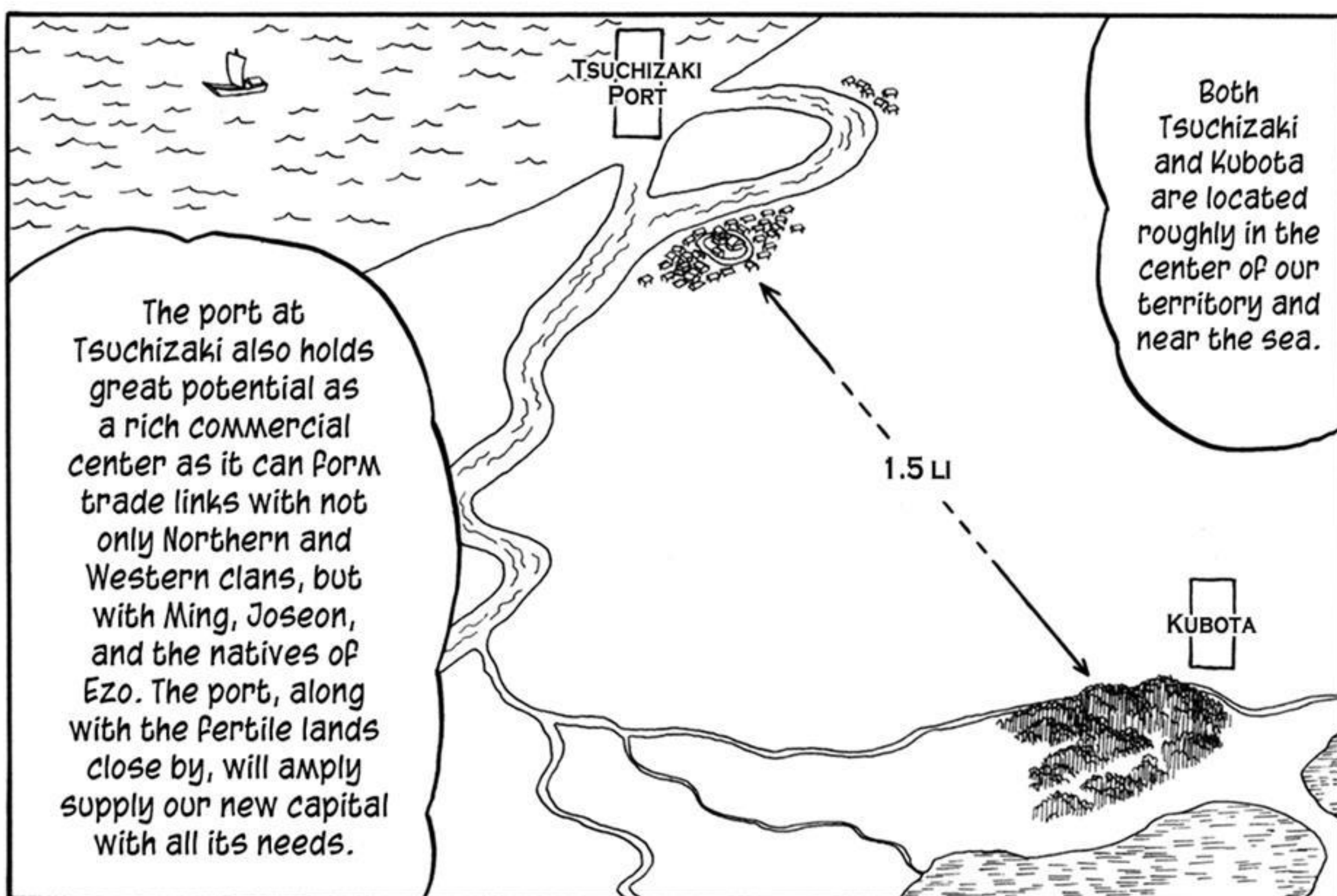
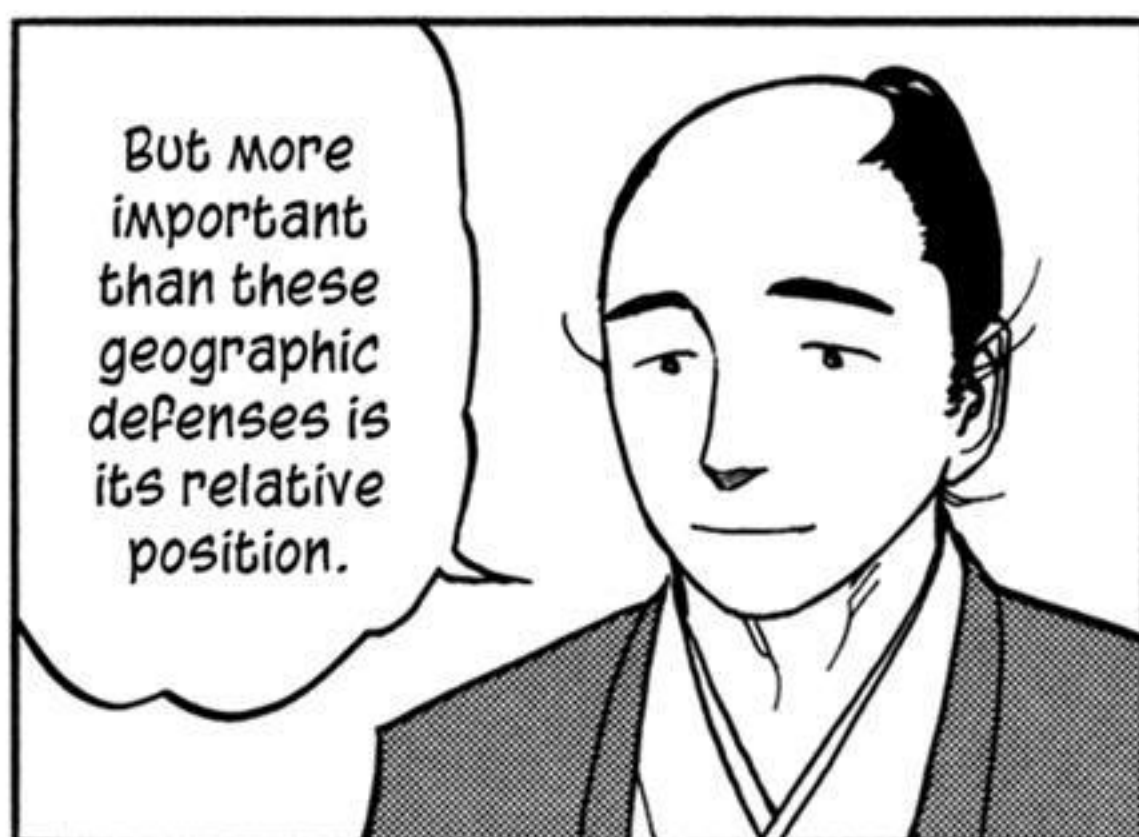


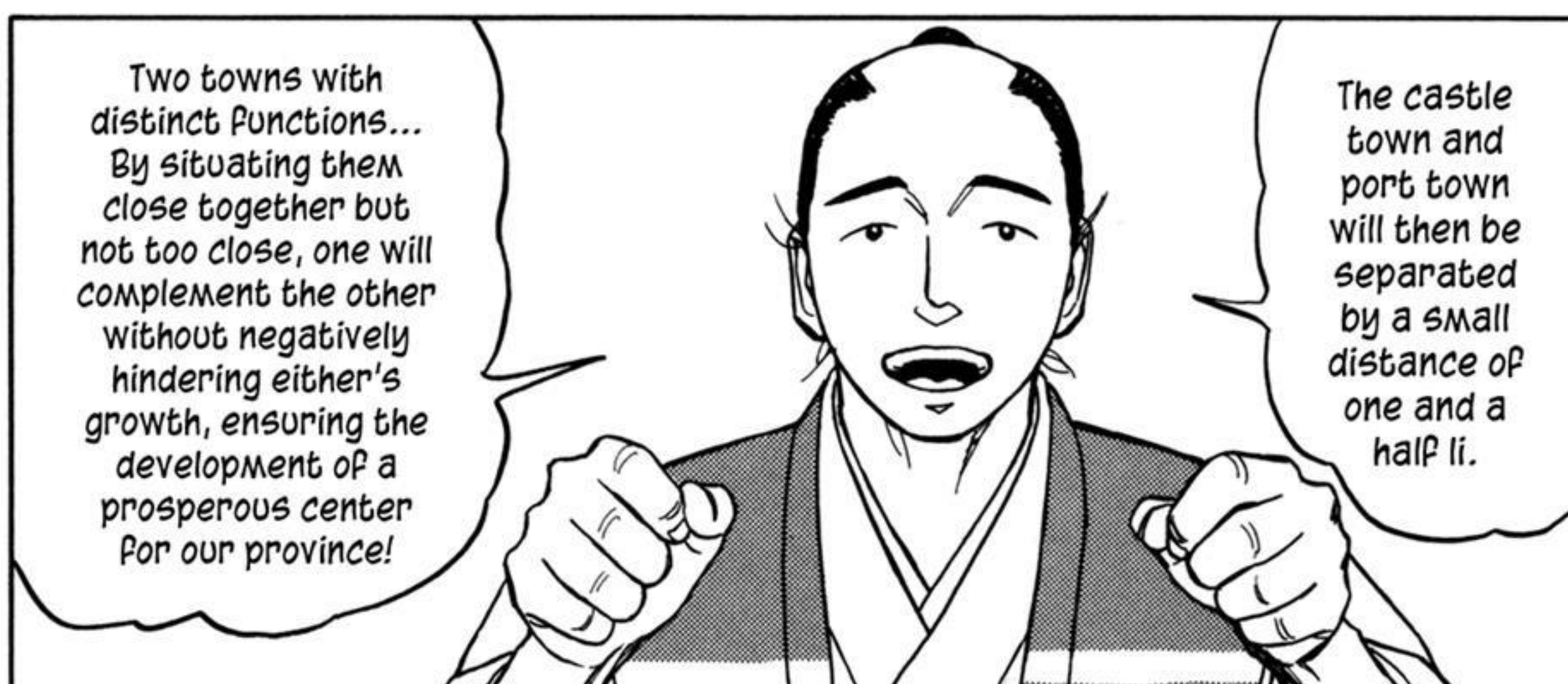
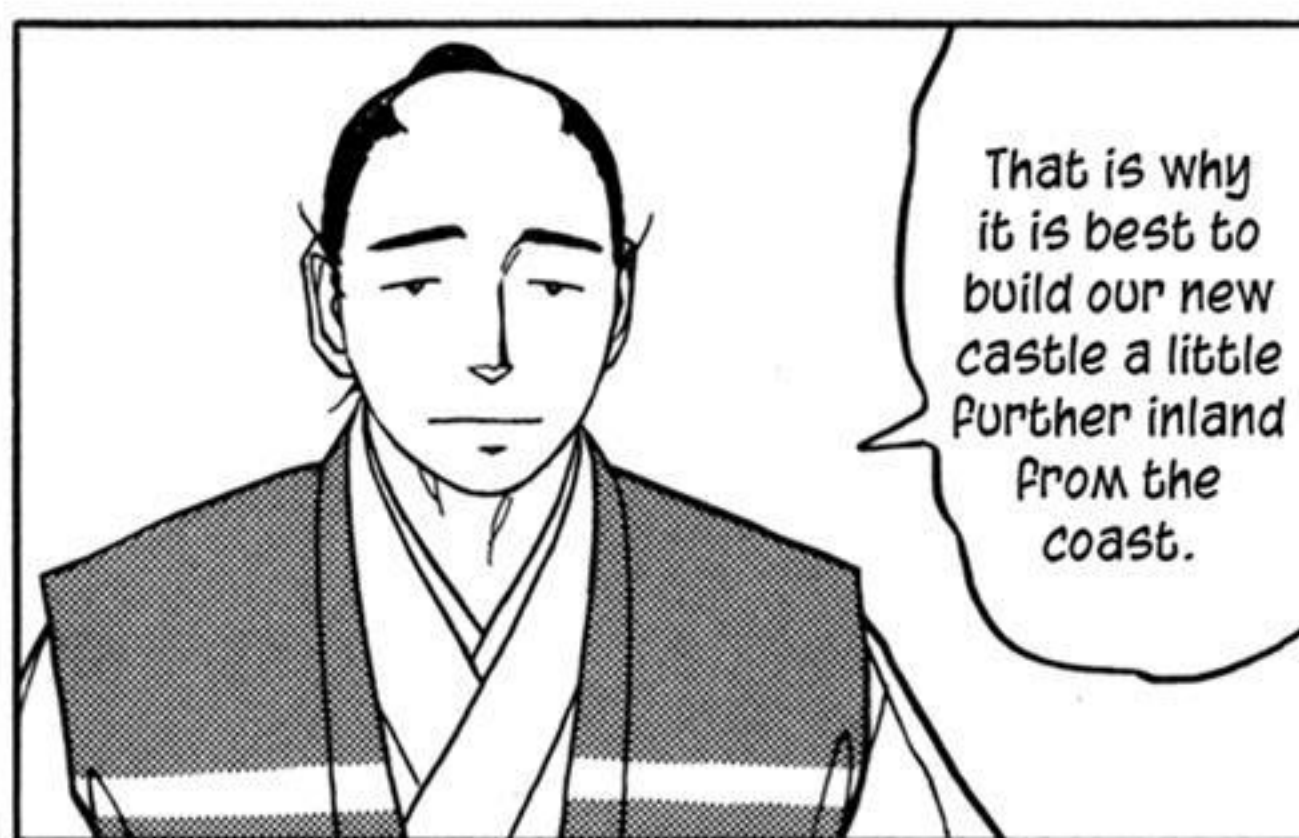




*Kubota literally means "sunken field"











Yes,
go ahead,
Kajiwara.



May
I then
speak?



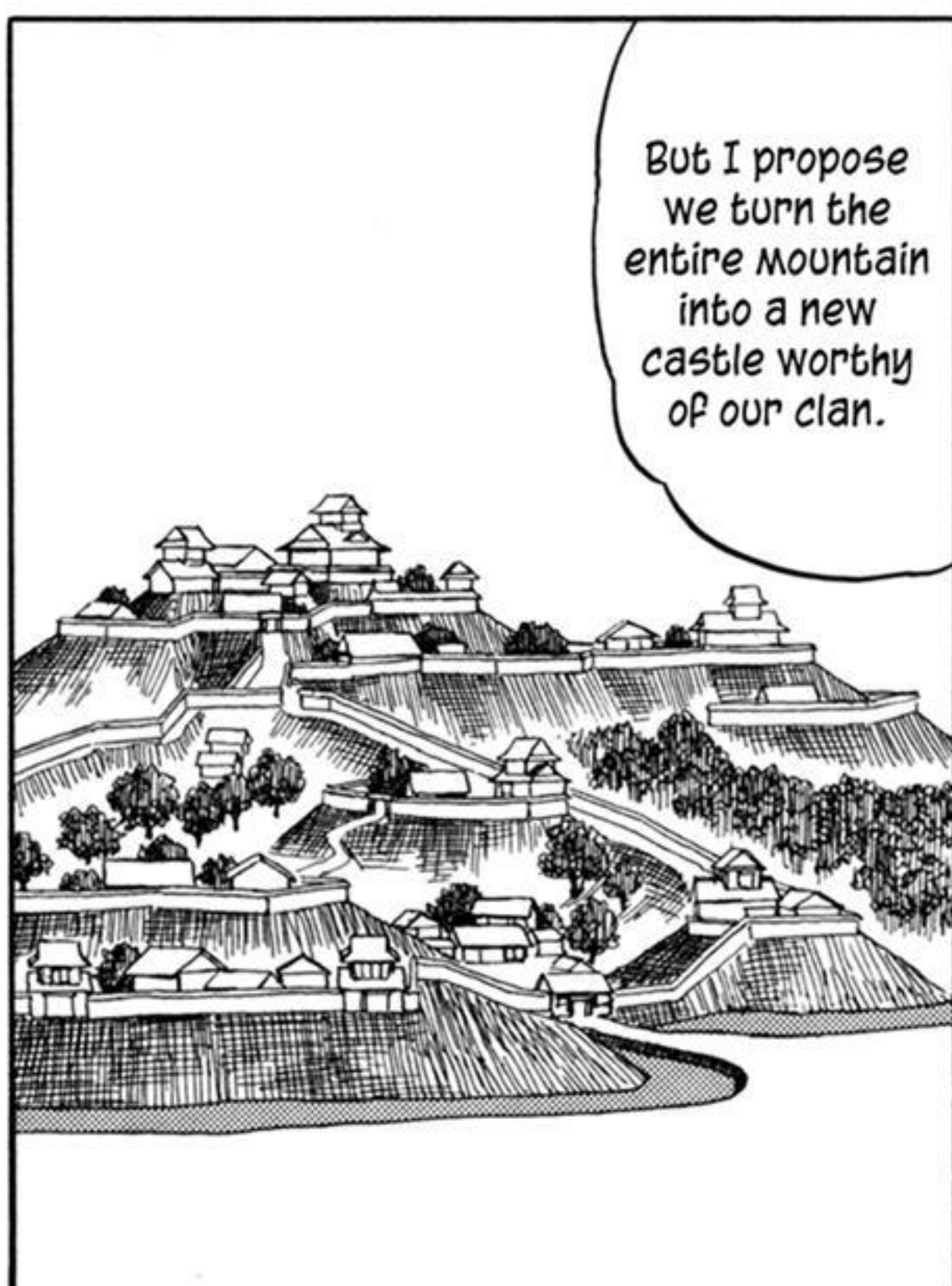
Kane-
zawa,
you
say?



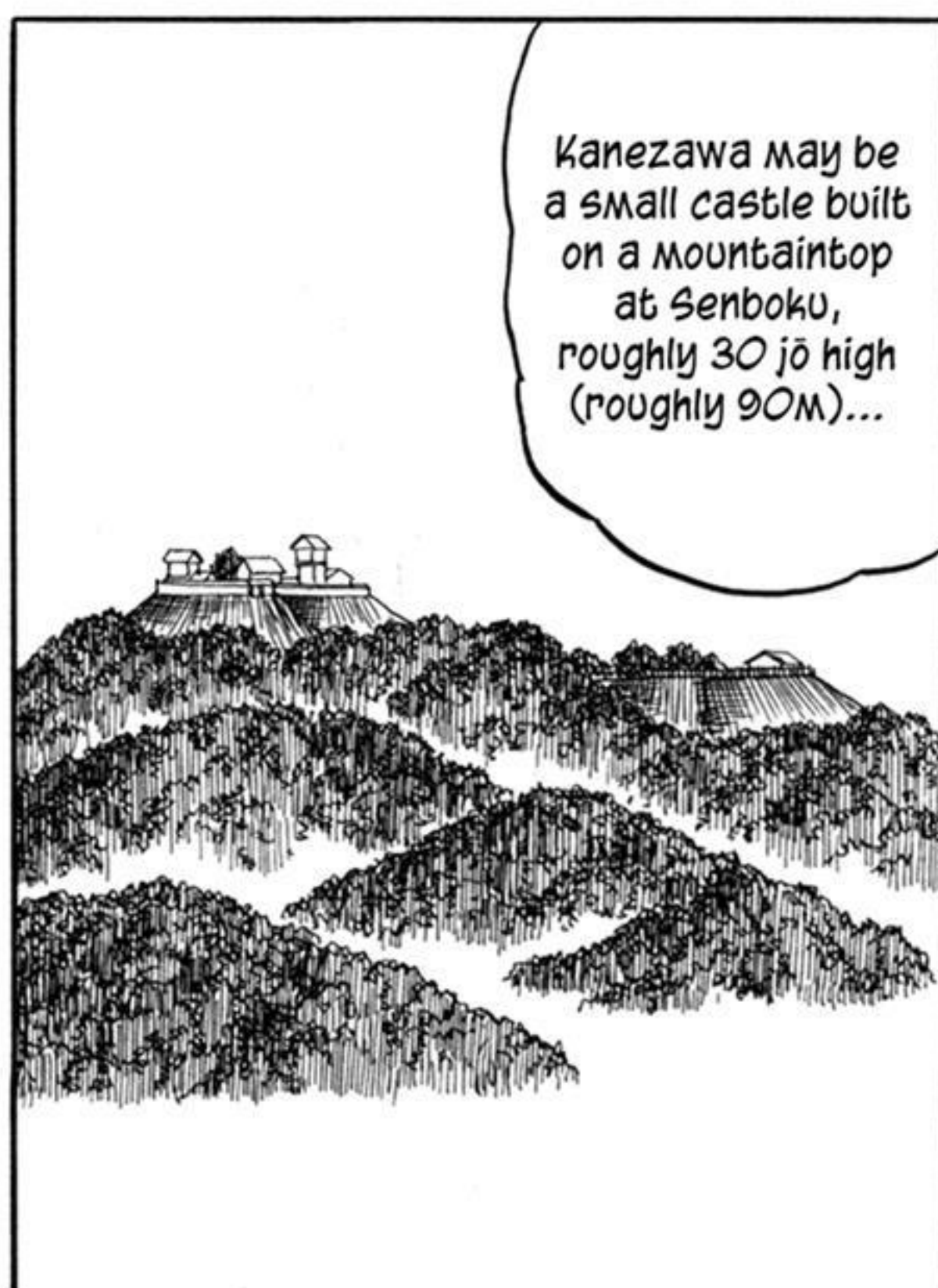
Yes,
my lord!



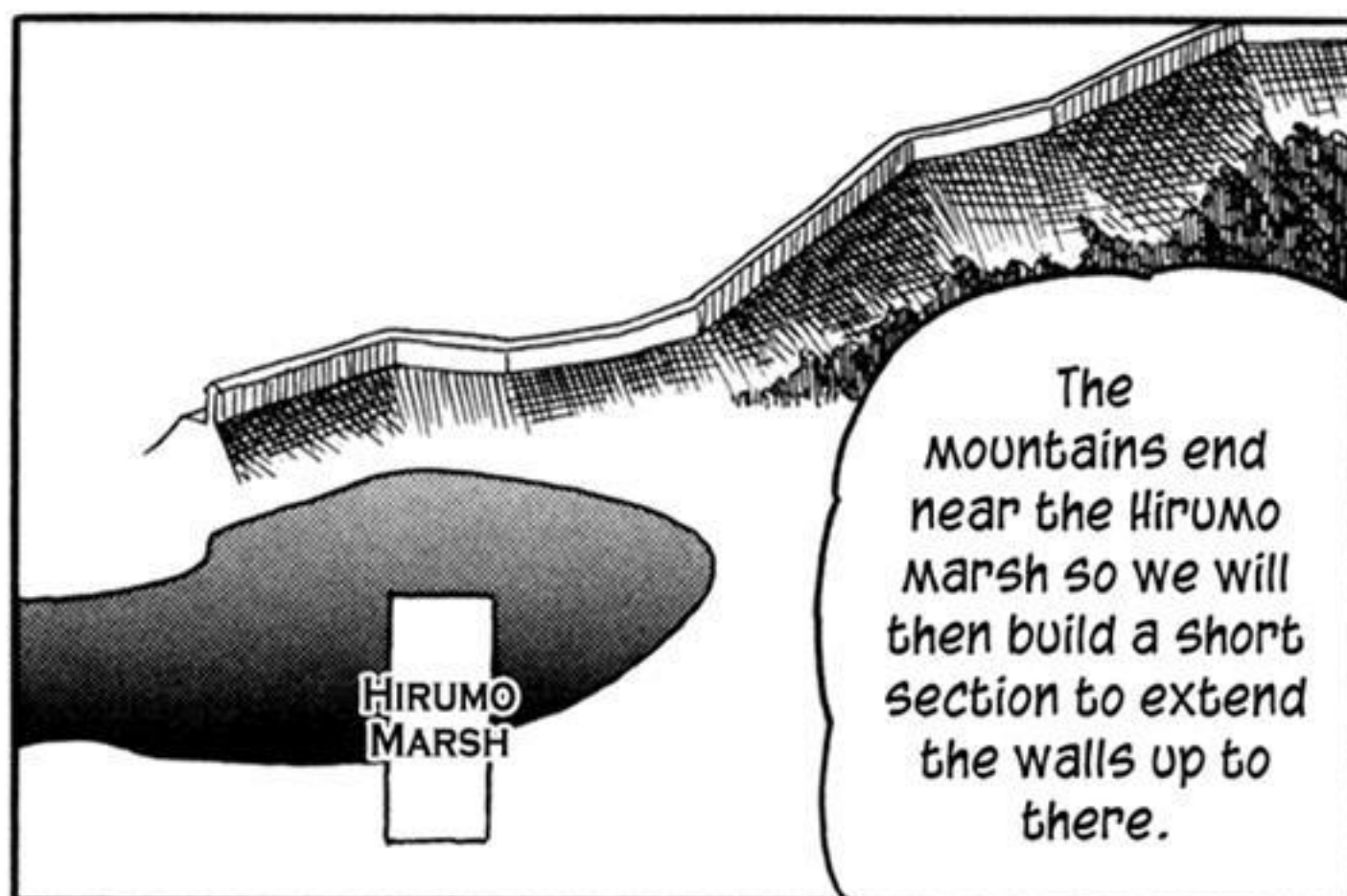
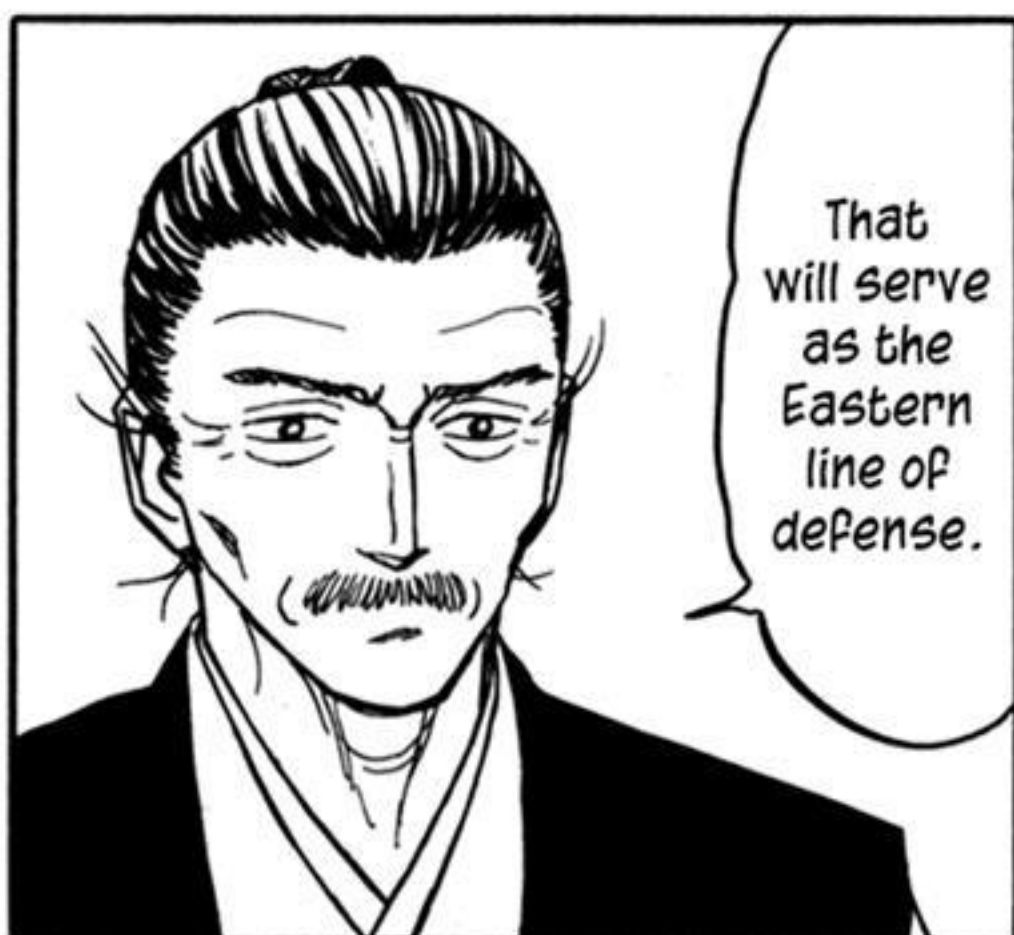
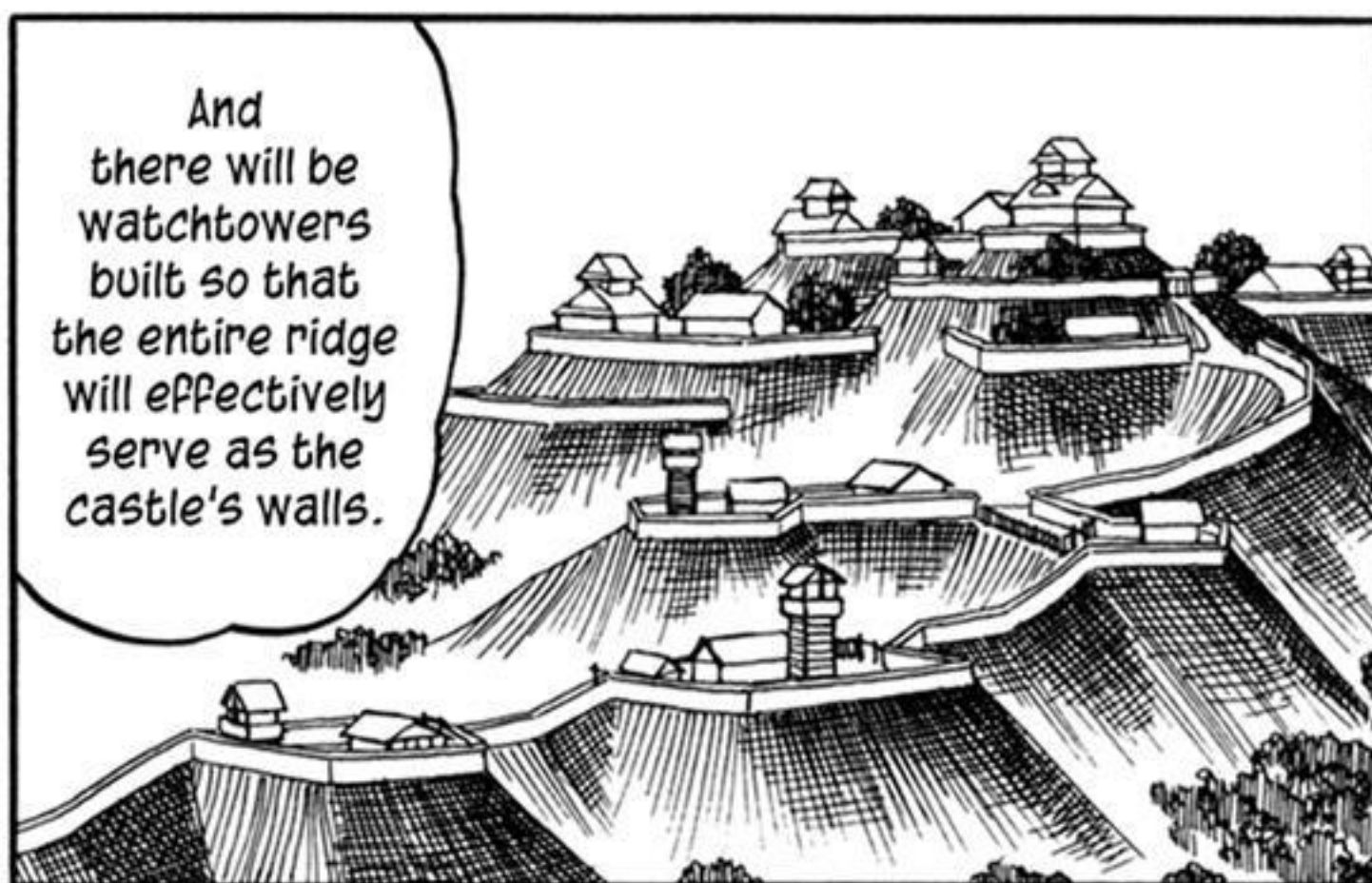
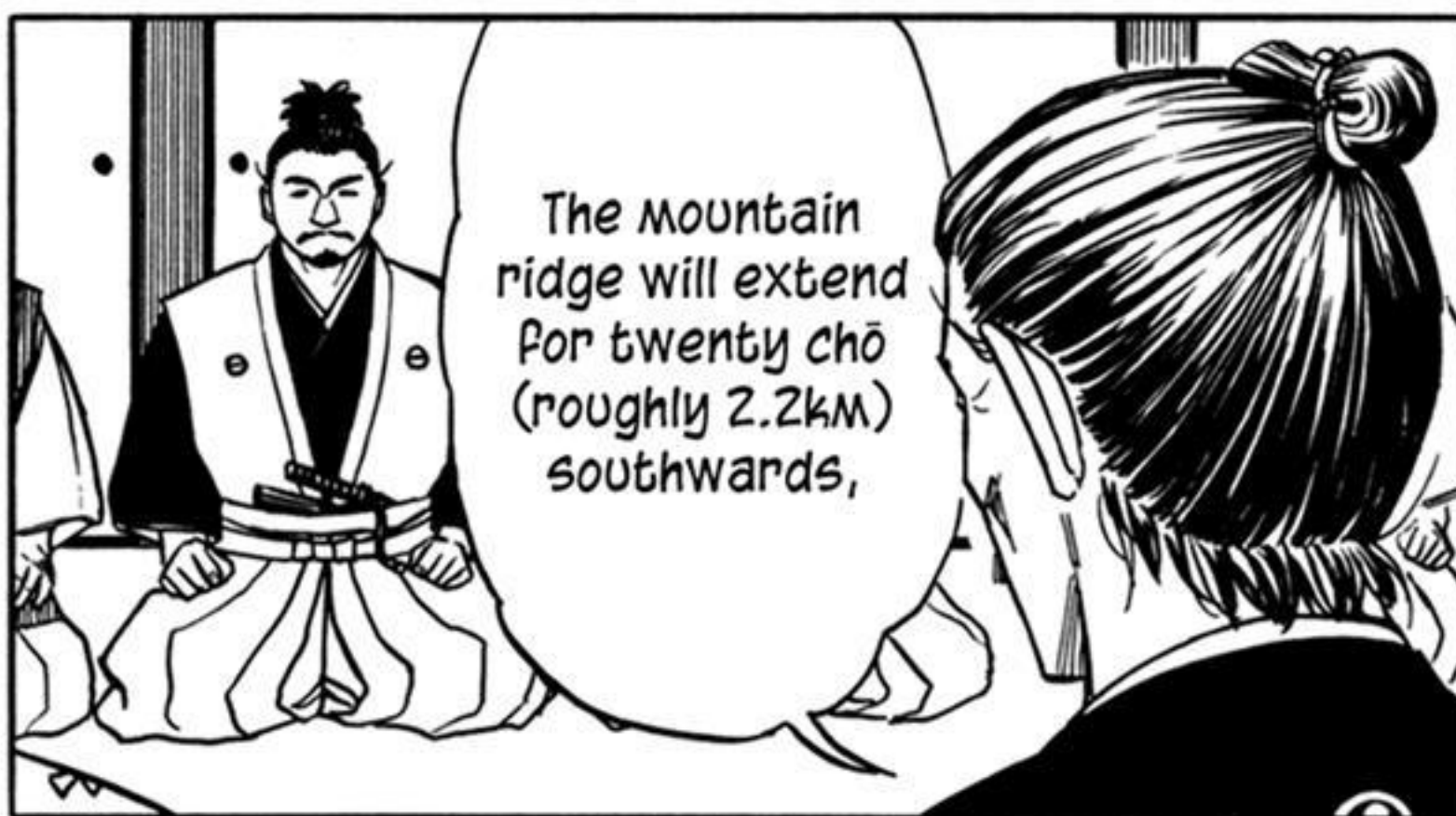
I would like
to propose
the Kanezawa
castle at
Senboku be
rebuilt to our
purposes to
serve as our
clan's new
main castle.

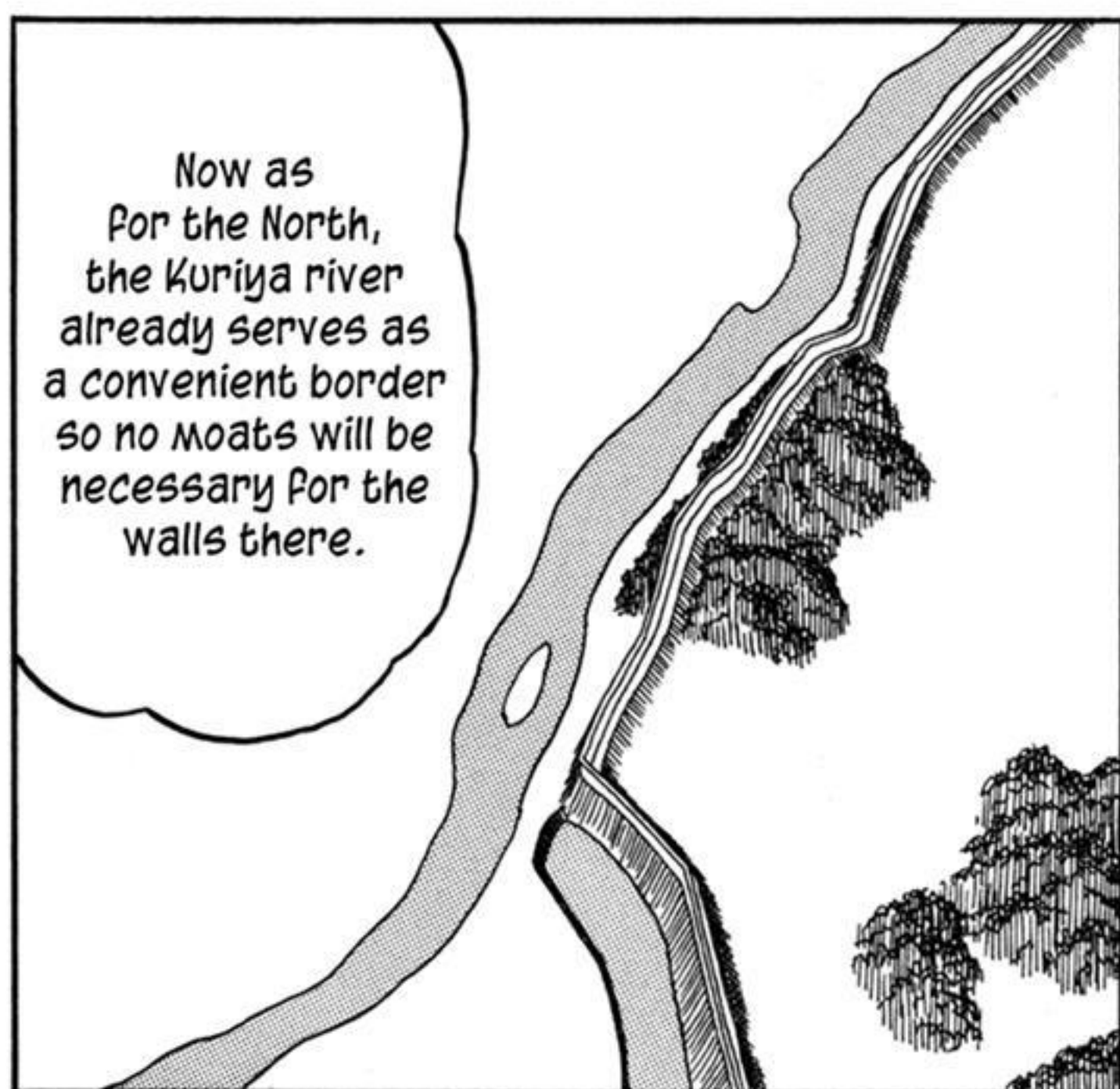
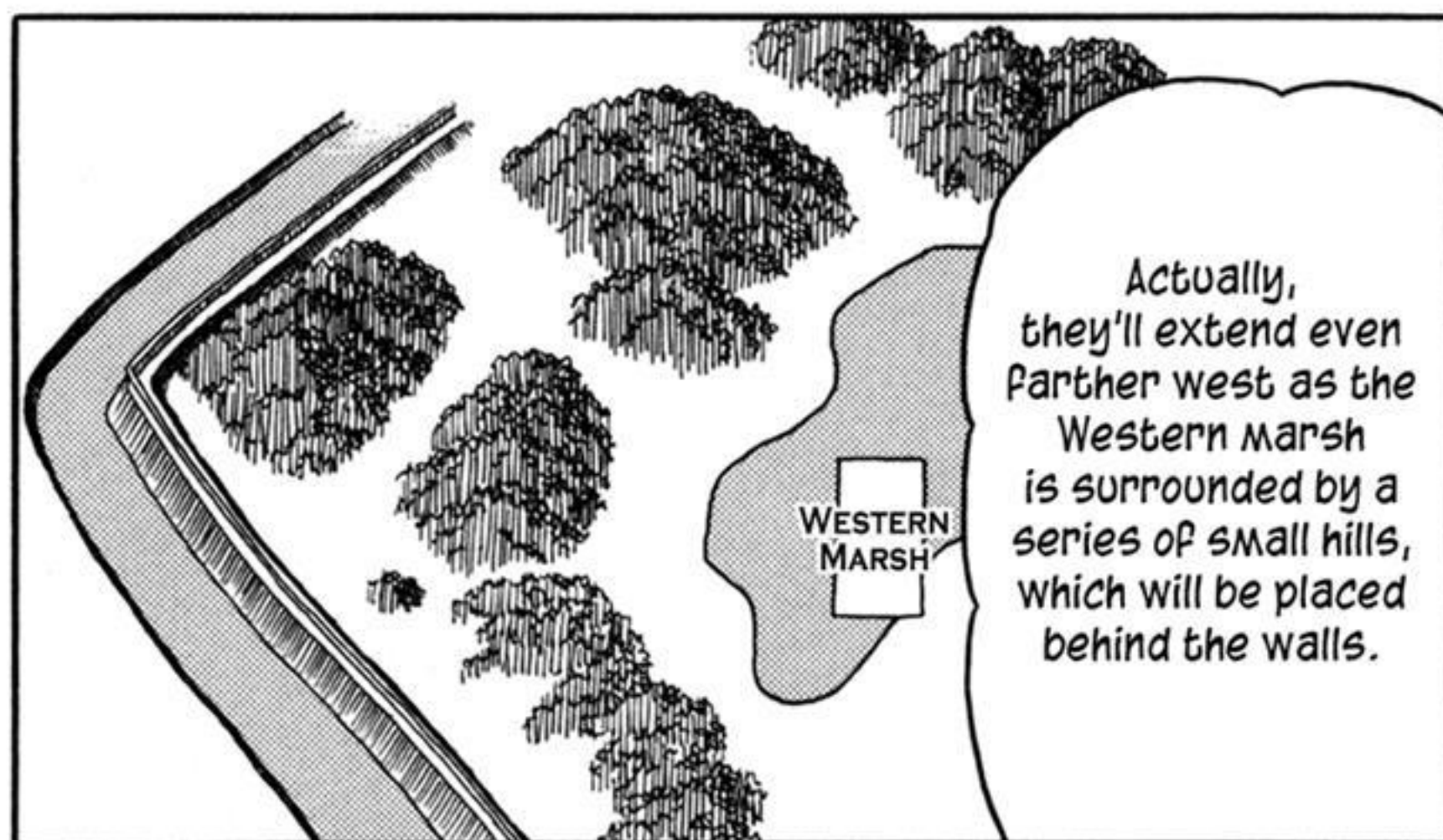
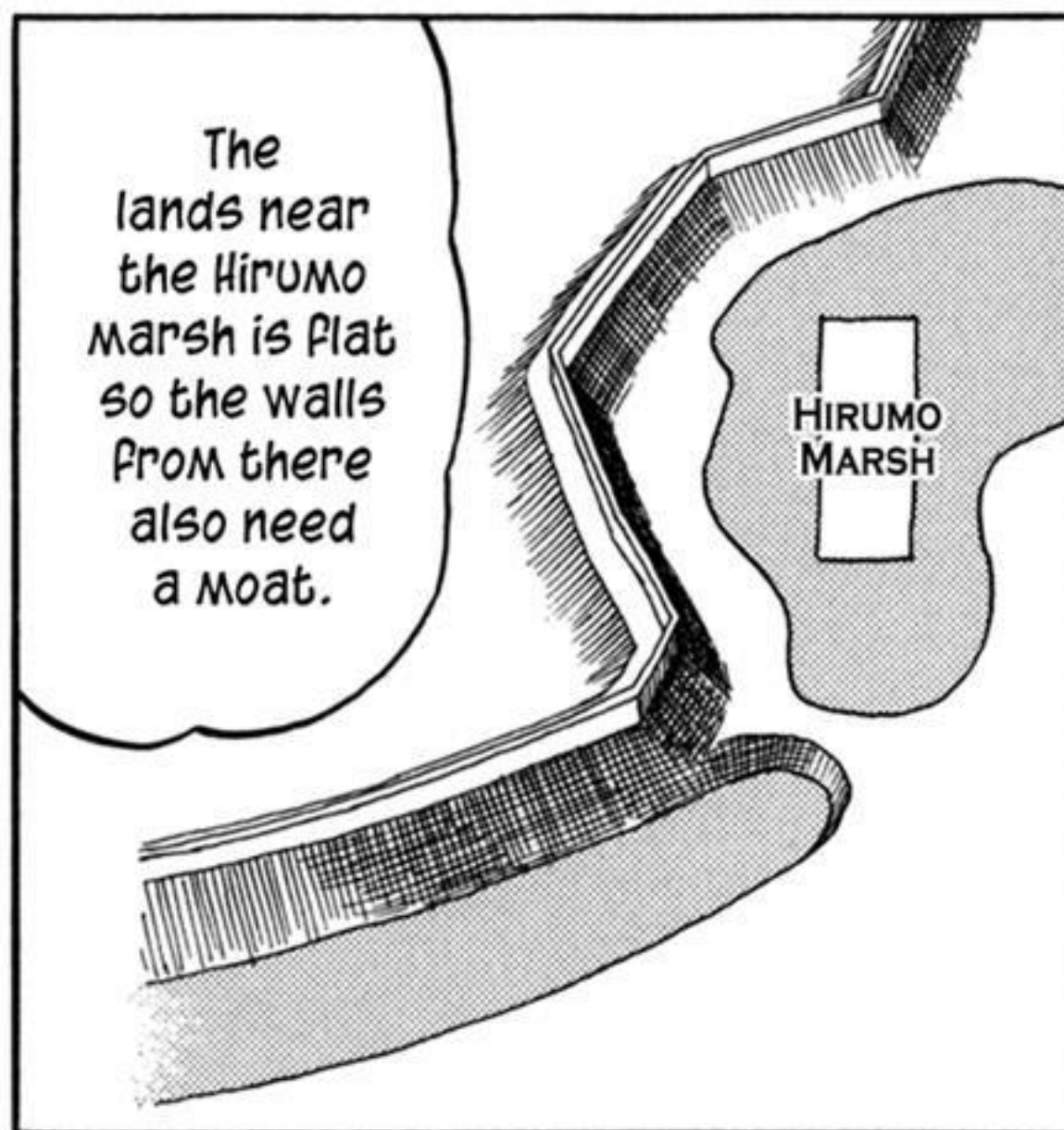
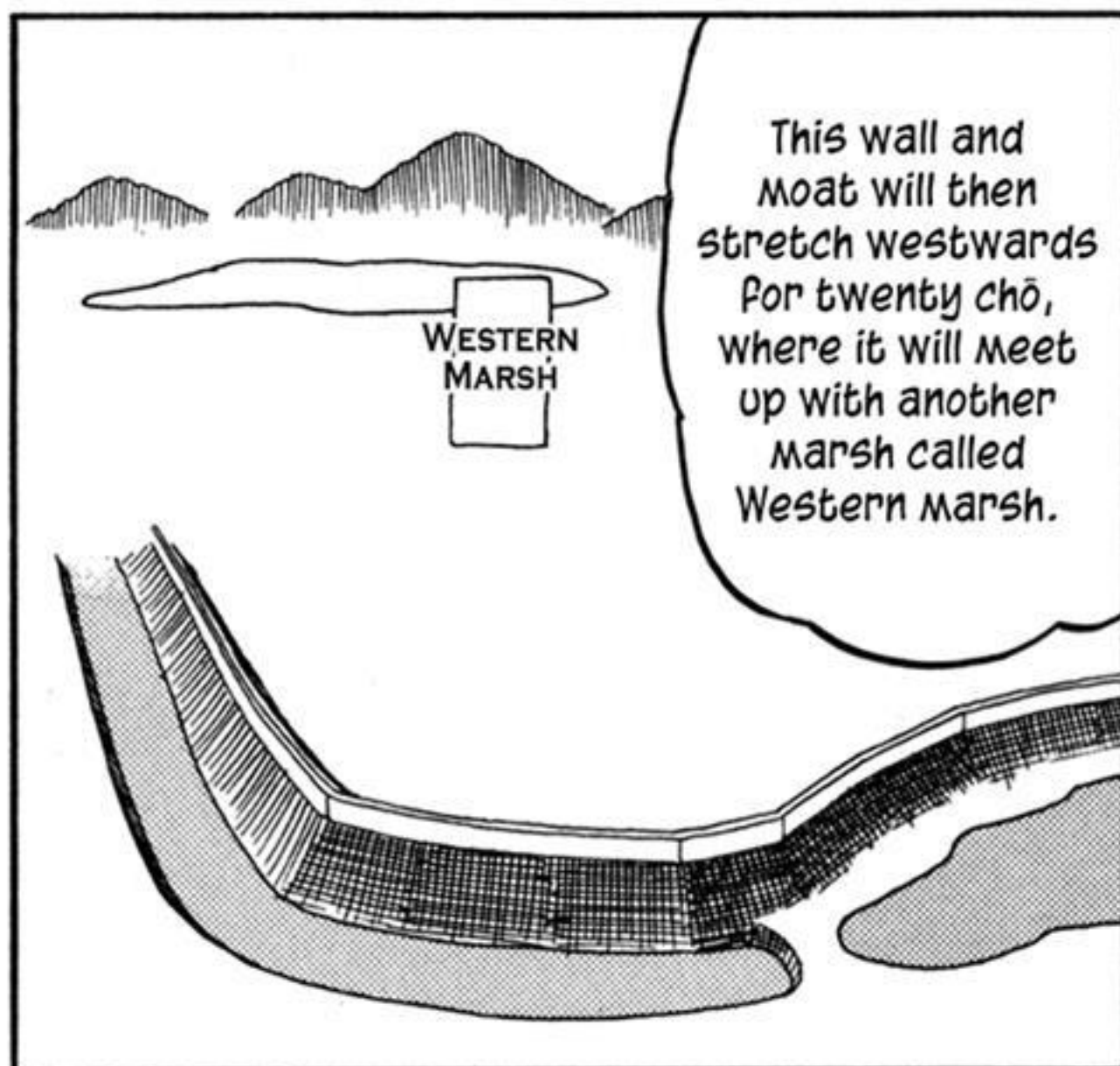


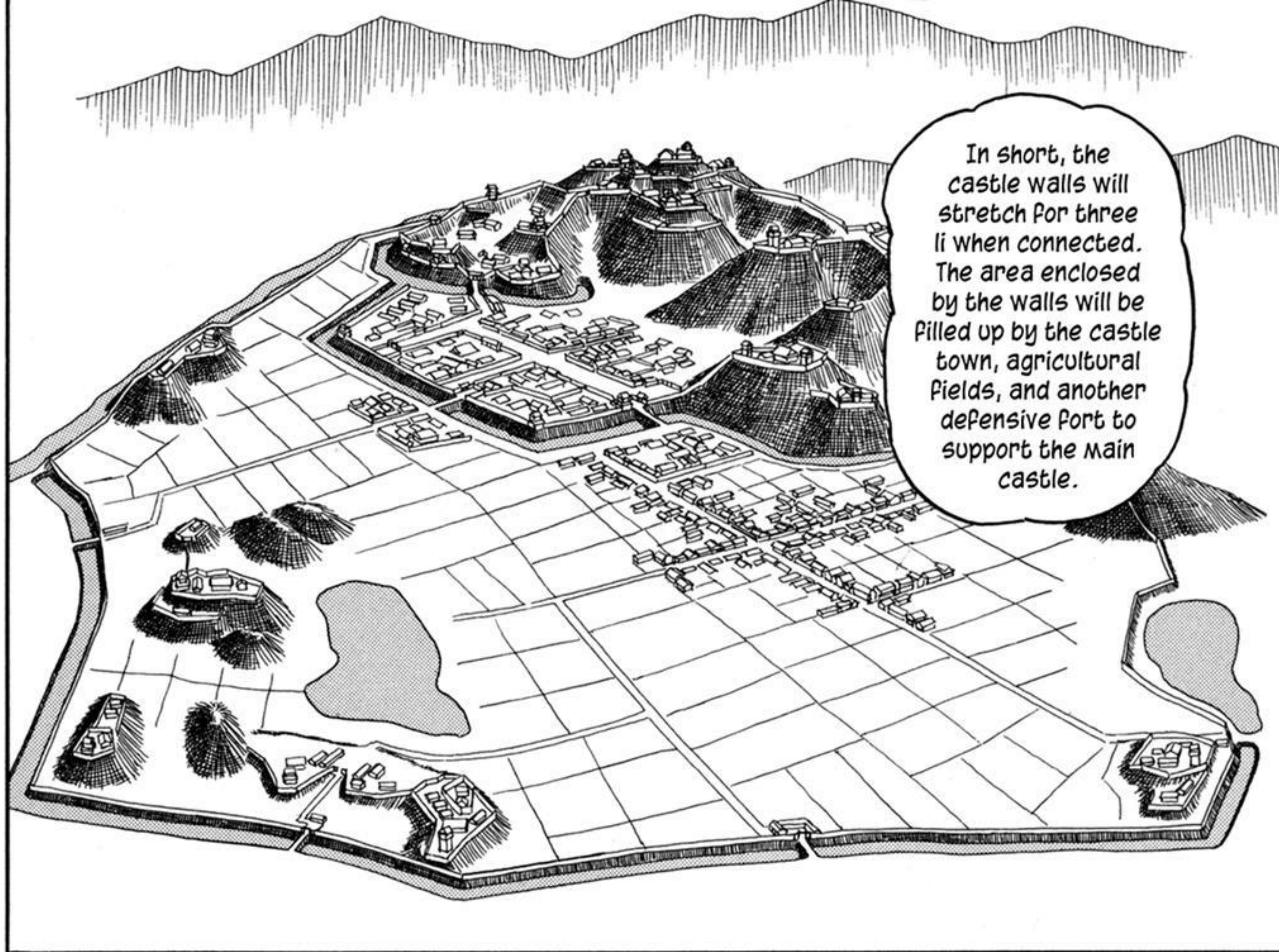
But I propose
we turn the
entire mountain
into a new
castle worthy
of our clan.



Kanezawa may be
a small castle built
on a mountaintop
at Senboku,
roughly 30 jō high
(roughly 90m)...







In short, the castle walls will stretch for three li when connected. The area enclosed by the walls will be filled up by the castle town, agricultural fields, and another defensive fort to support the main castle.



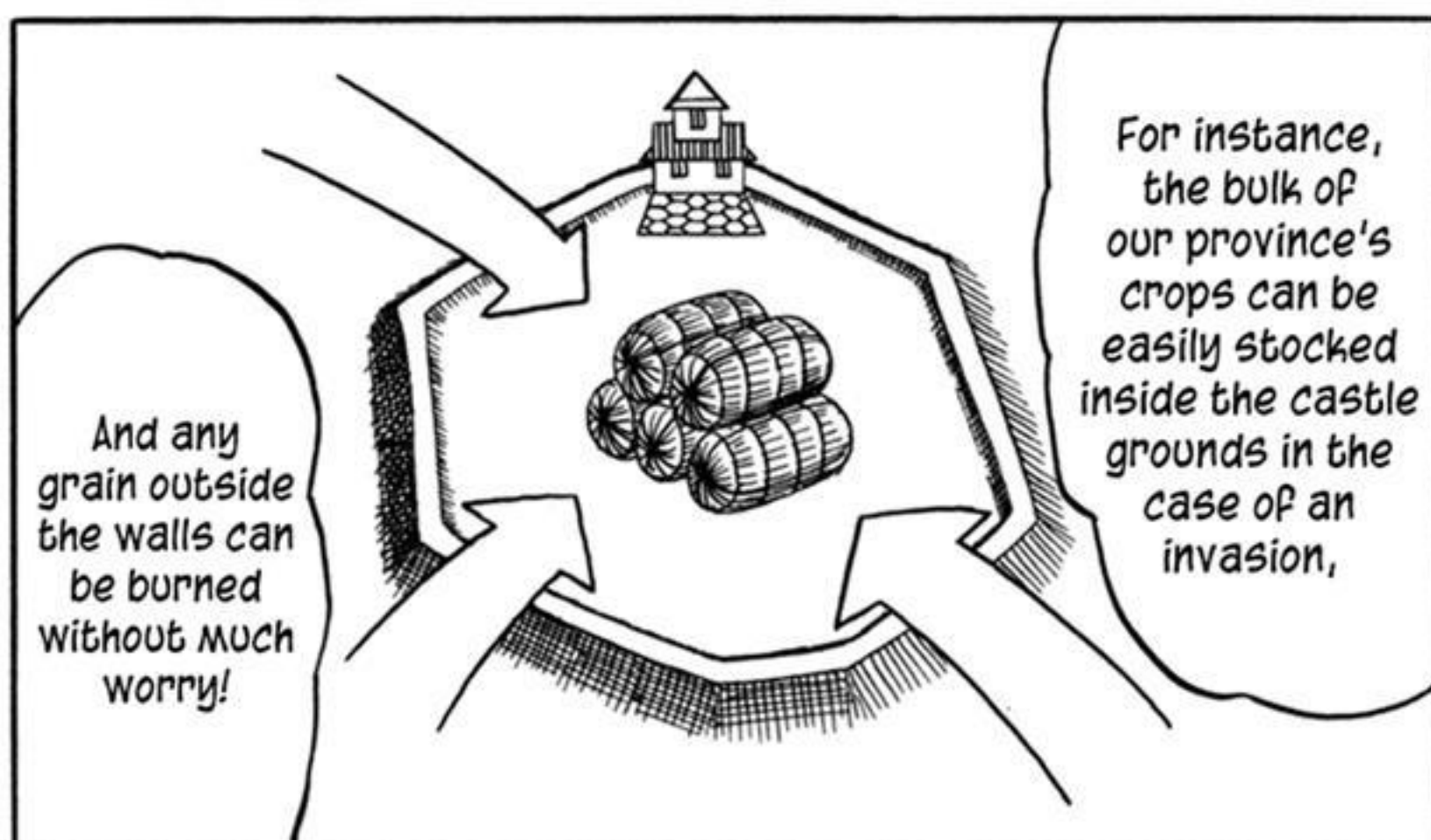
A length of three li...? Is that not a little too big?

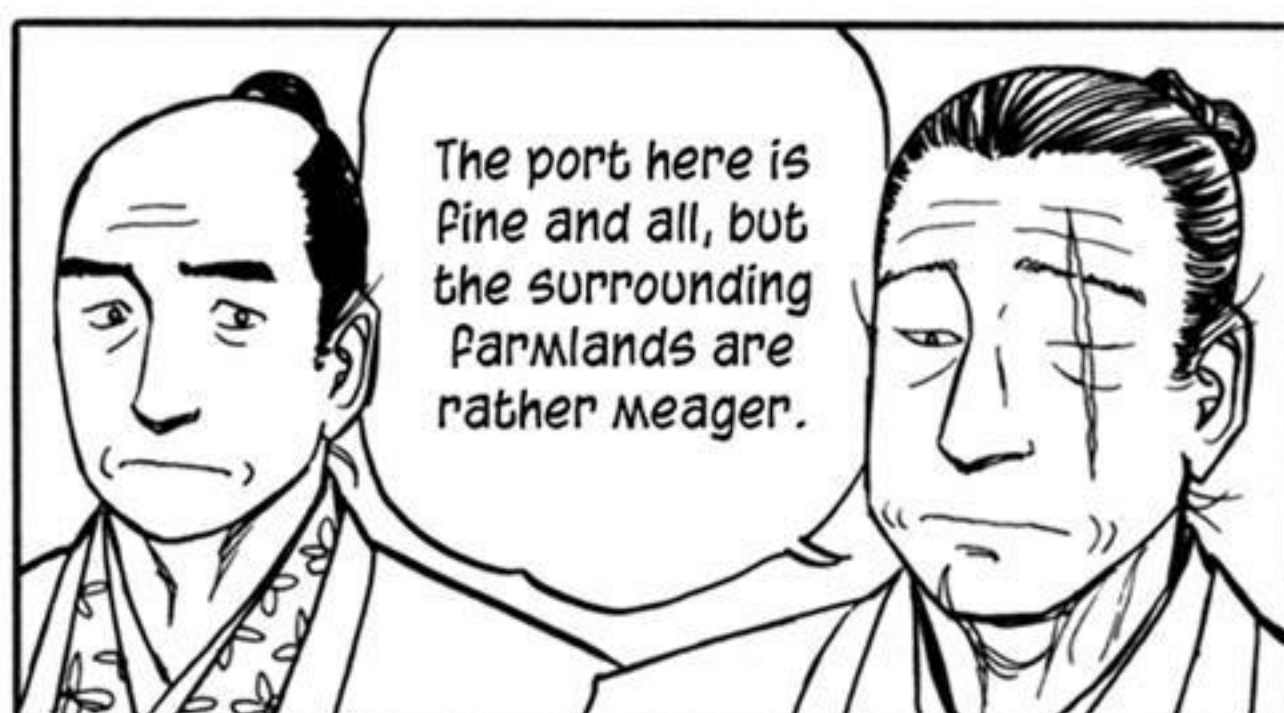
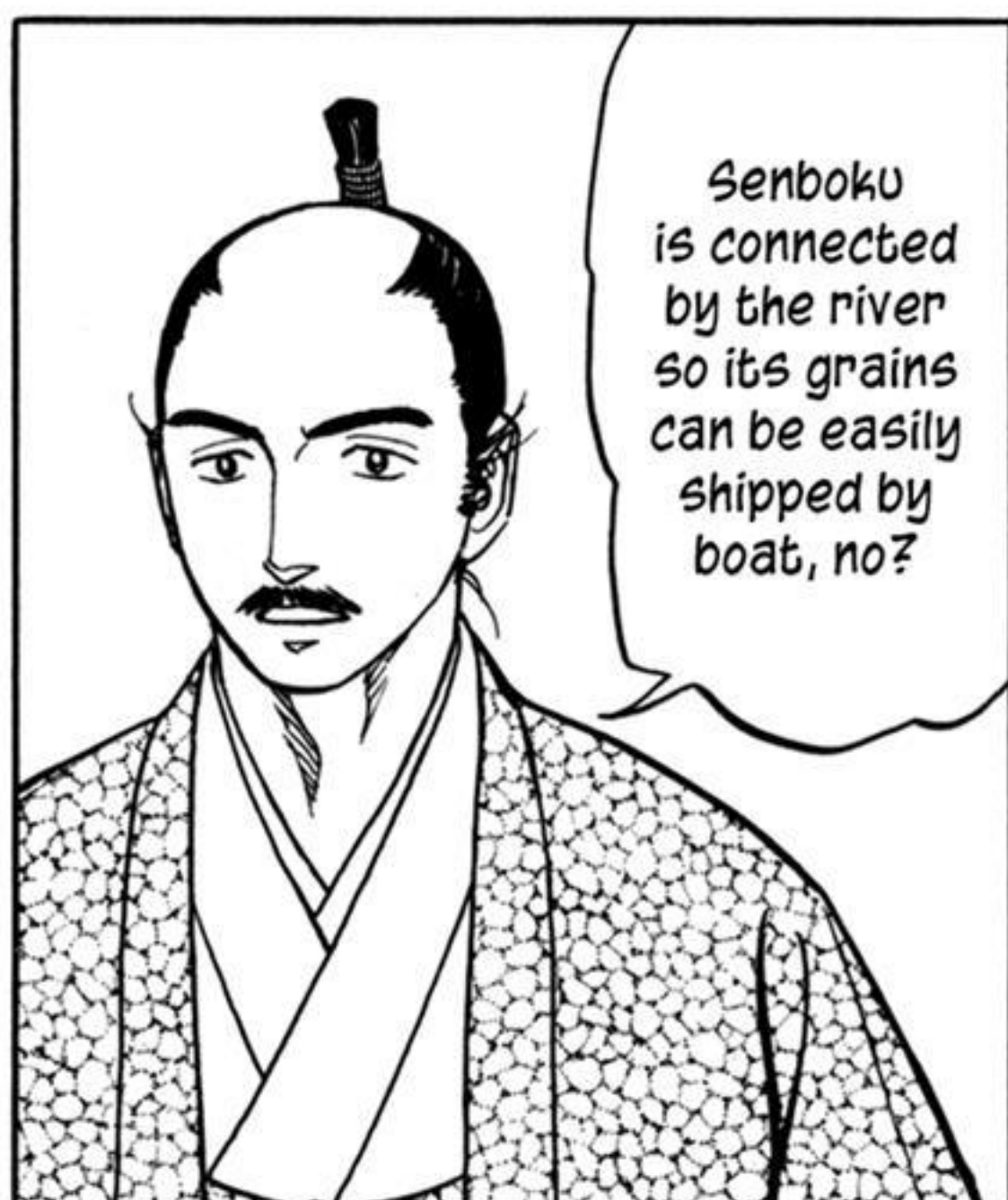


In other words, it is a proposal for a "castle-province" of sorts.

That is the prime objective for the scale of my proposal.

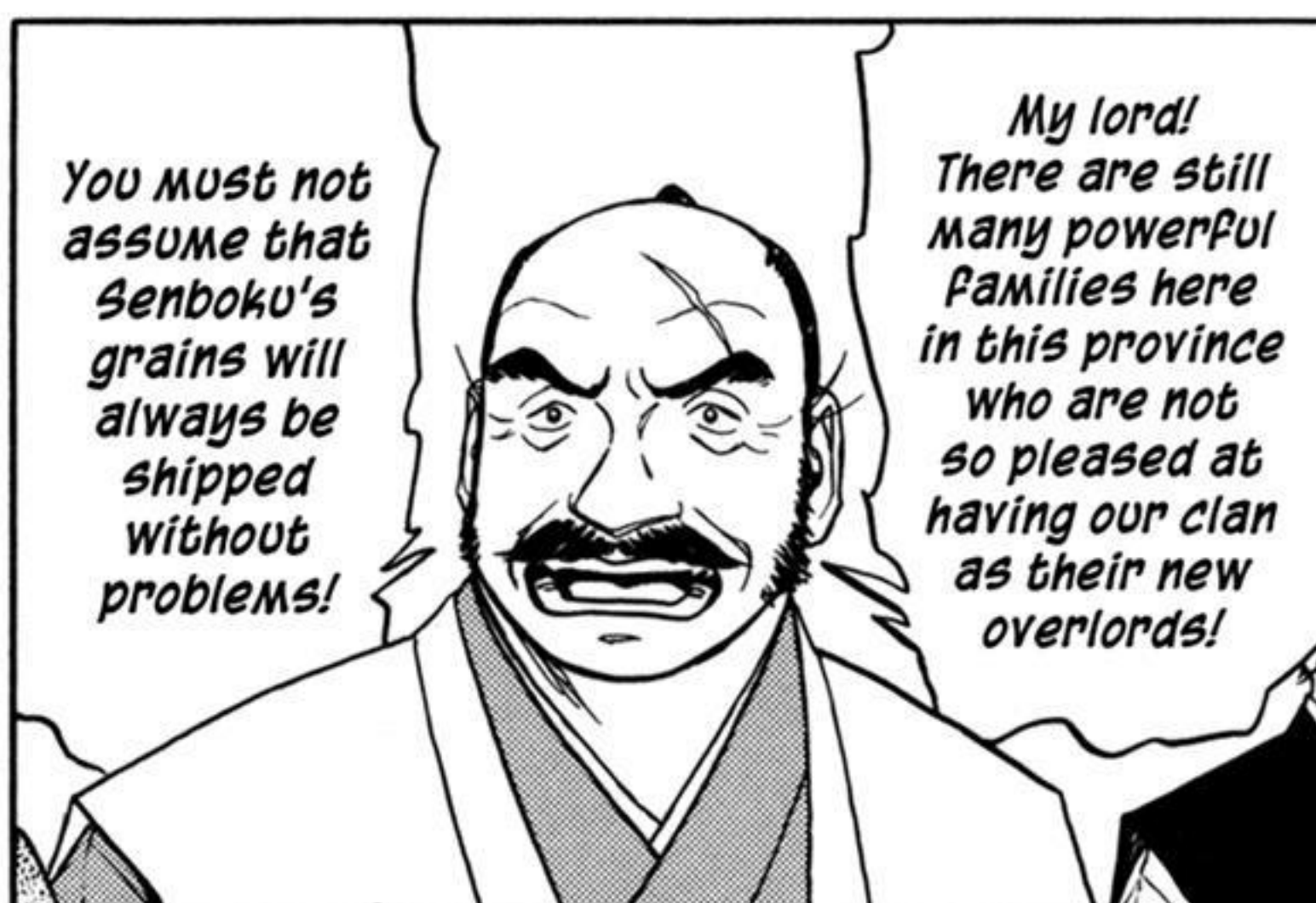
I do not believe so. Admittedly, the construction for this undertaking might not be fully complete even during the reign of my lord's successor, but this castle can surely survive for years and years even if tens of thousands of enemy troops were to try and lay siege.







True,
Senboku is
one region
we must
bring under
our firm
control
first.



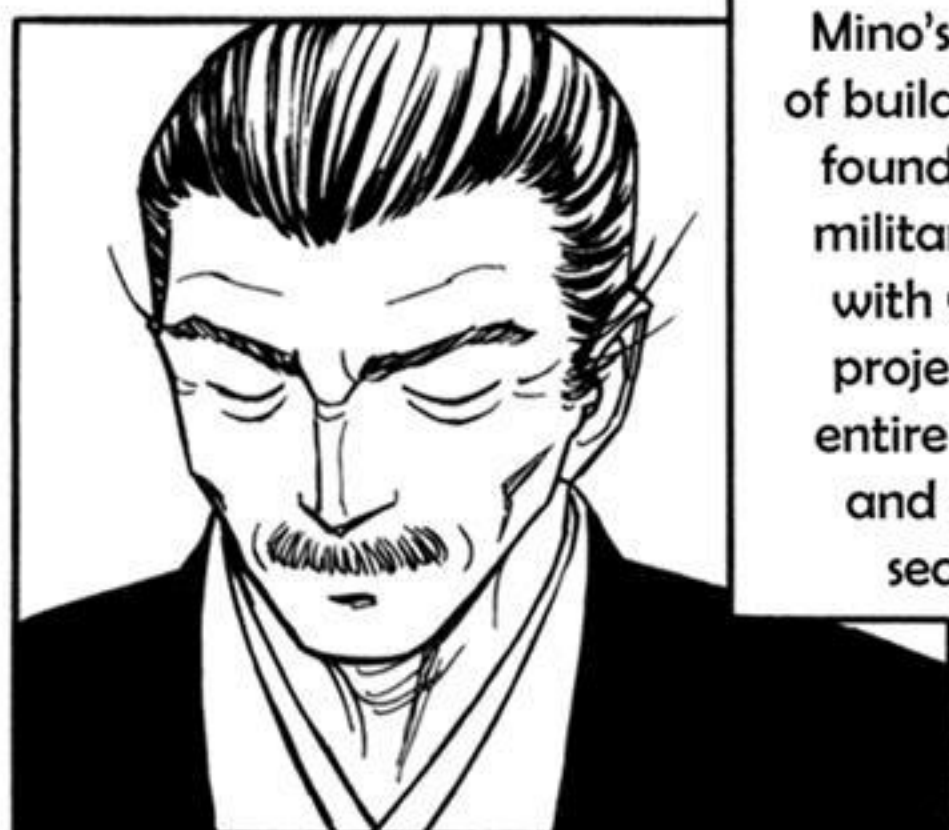
You must not
assume that
Senboku's
grains will
always be
shipped
without
problems!

My lord!
There are still
many powerful
families here
in this province
who are not
so pleased at
having our clan
as their new
overlords!



Instead, their
hearts resonated
with Kajiwaru
Mino's proposal
of building a solid
foundation for
military-might,
with which to
project to the
entire province
and thereby
secure it.

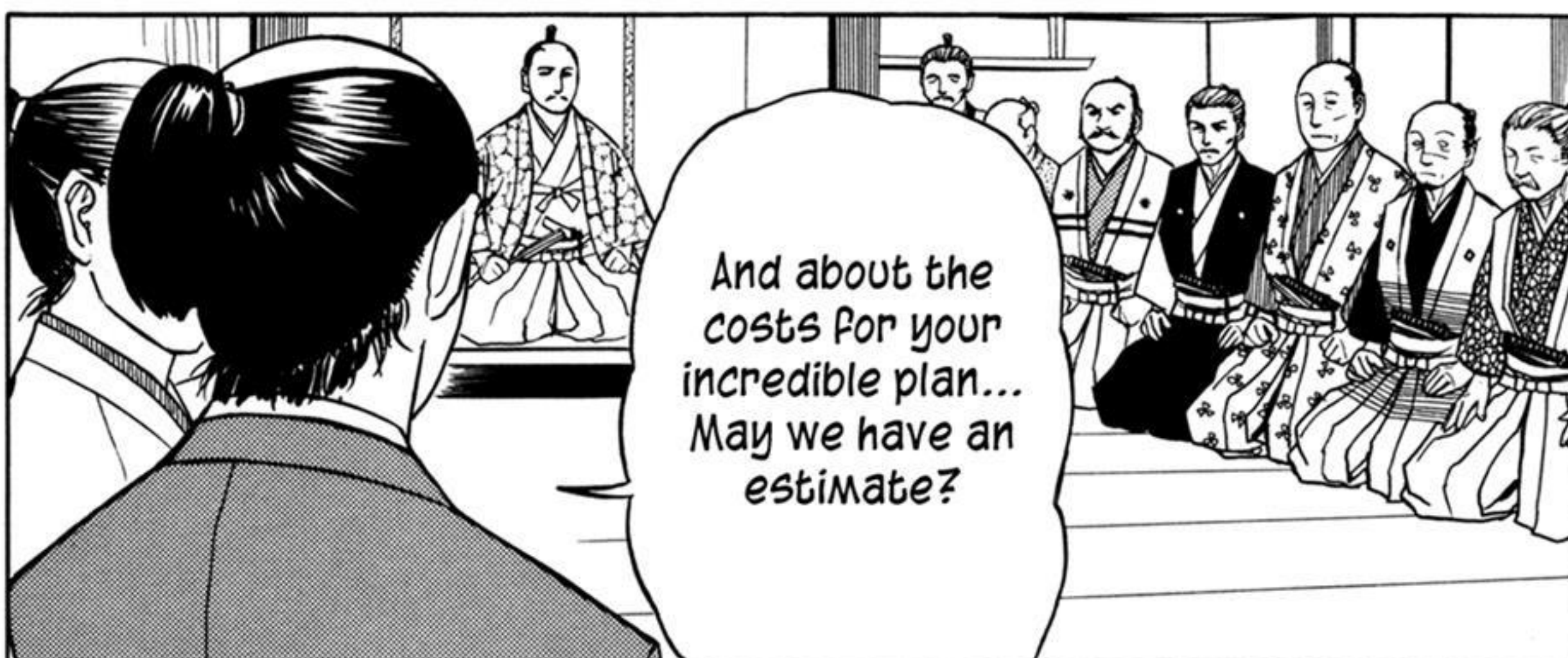
The senior vassals,
whose lives had been
shaped by endless wars
of the previous era,
were not easily swayed
by Shibue Naizen's
plans which focused on
forming trade links.

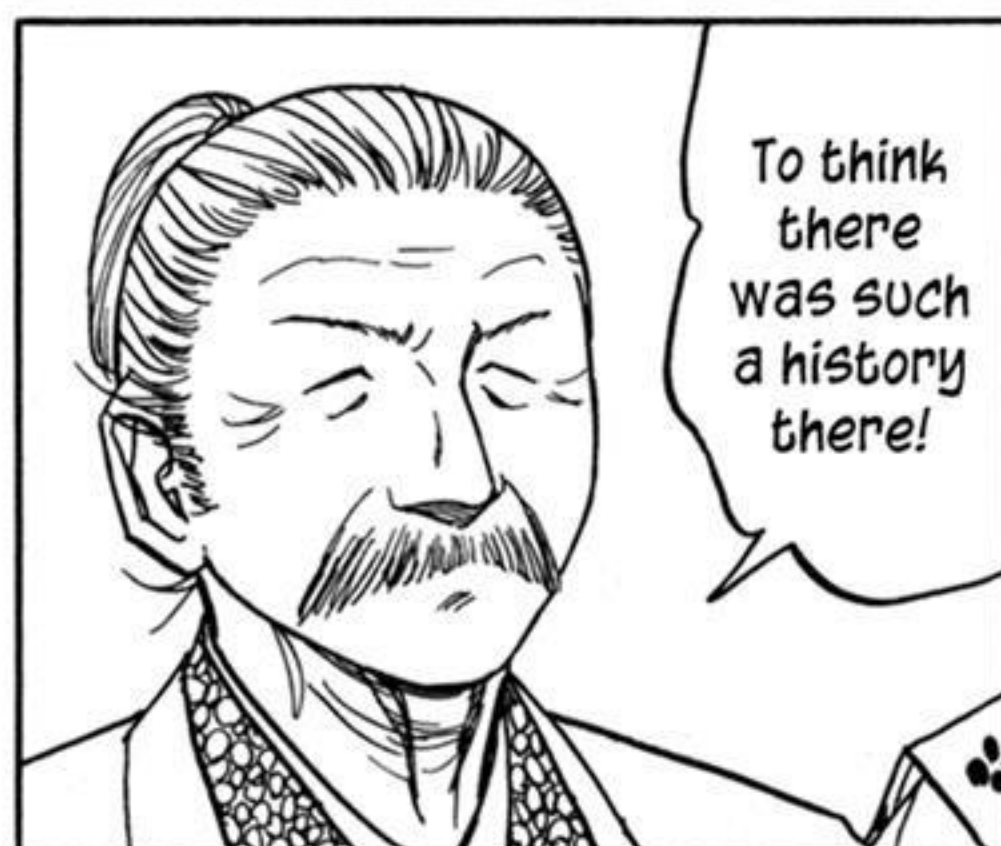
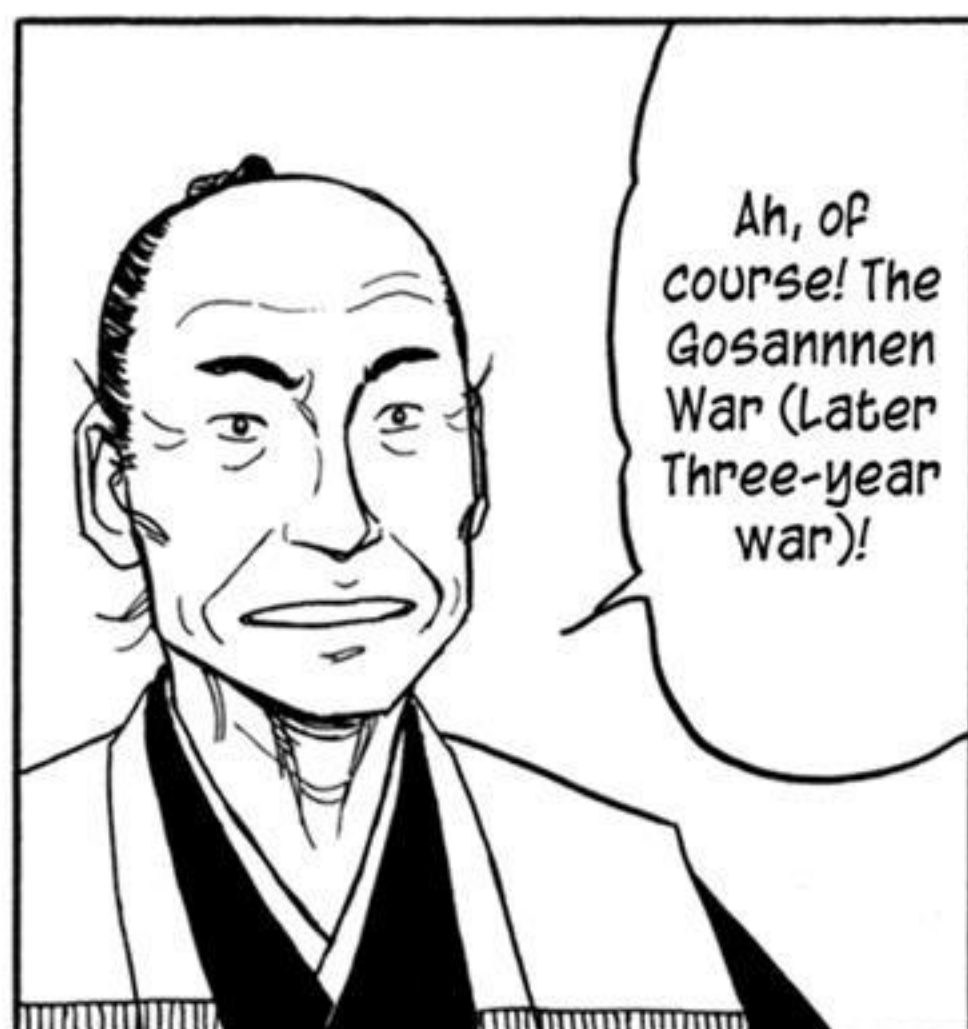


HMM...



What do
you think,
Naizen?









Pardon Me...
but may I
have a turn
to speak?



Can a
decision
not be
reached
today?

Well, I
believe it
is almost
time for
today's
meeting
to end.



I lost
my chance
to speak up
earlier when
the debate
suddenly
took quite a
stimulating
turn.

I would
like to
make a
proposal
of my
own.



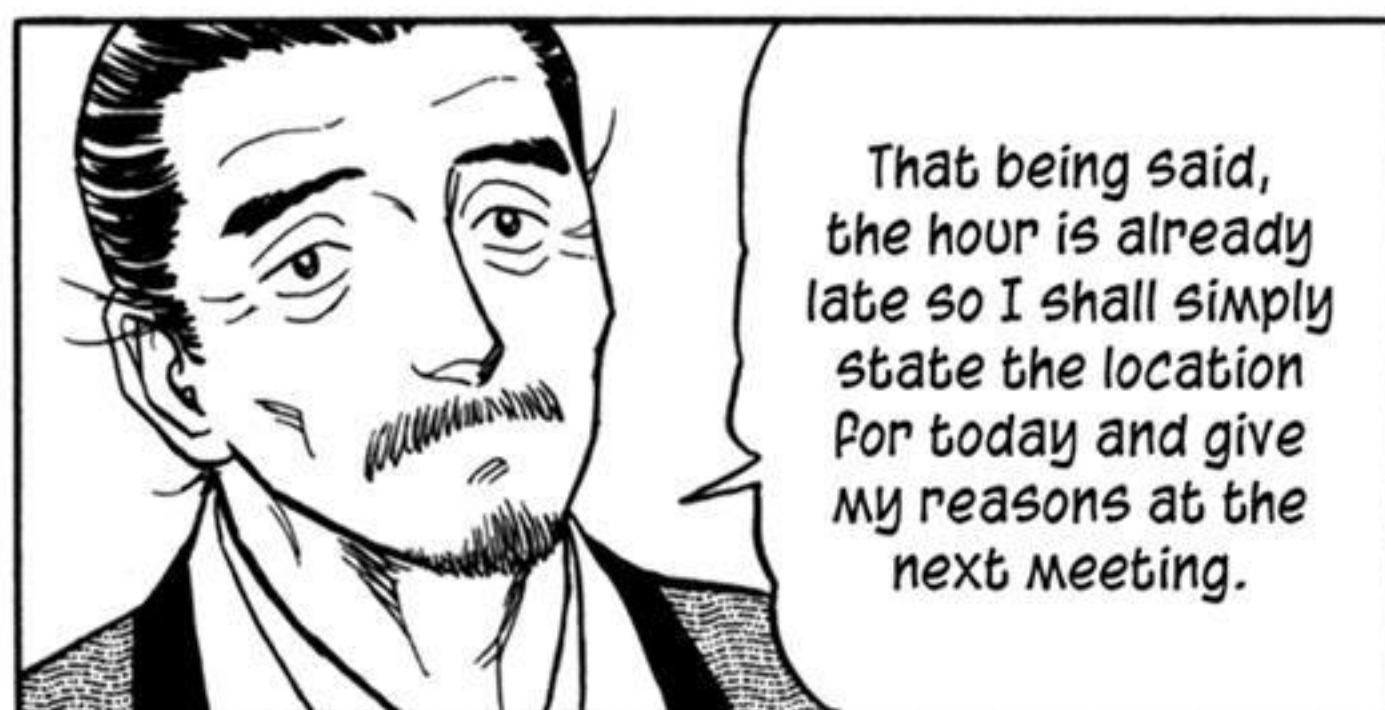
Pardon...?



Please
go ahead,
Ōtono.

M-My
apologies.

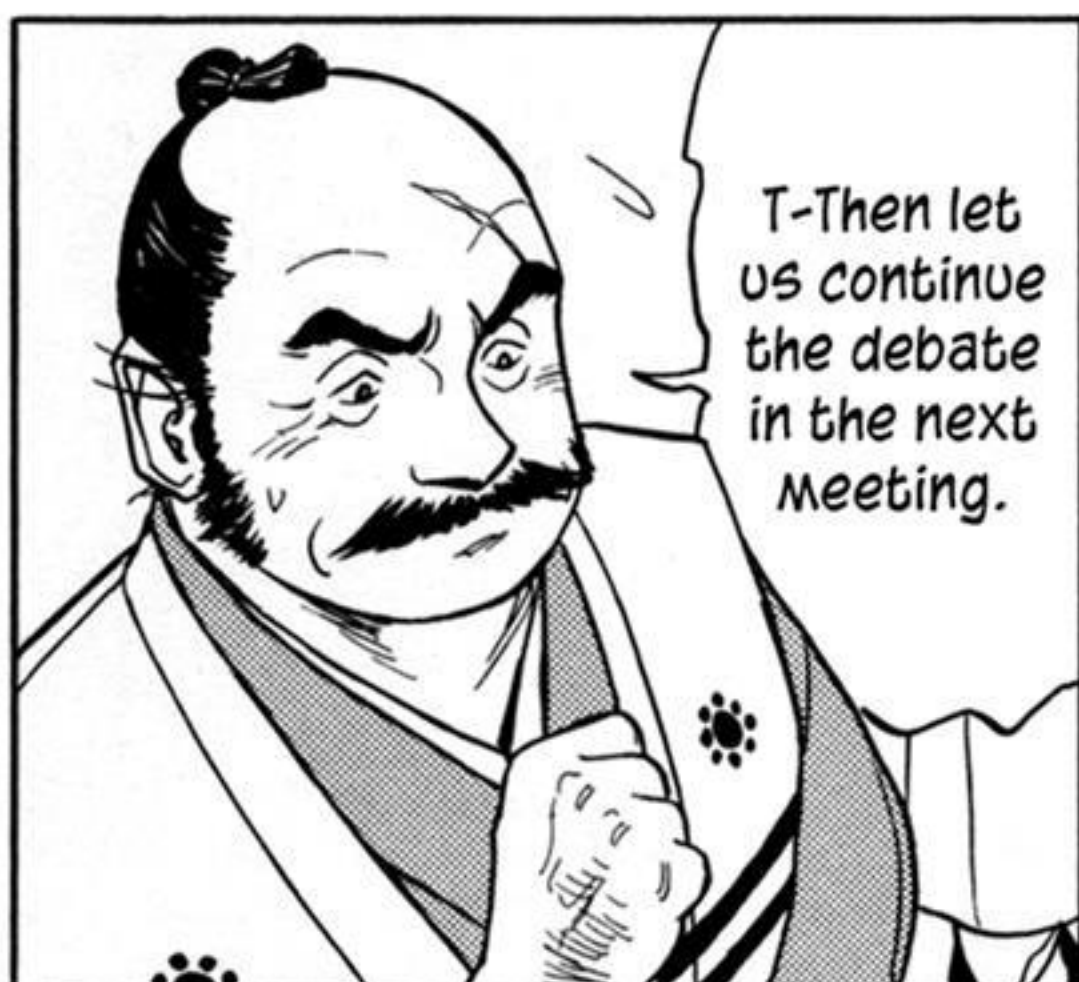
...

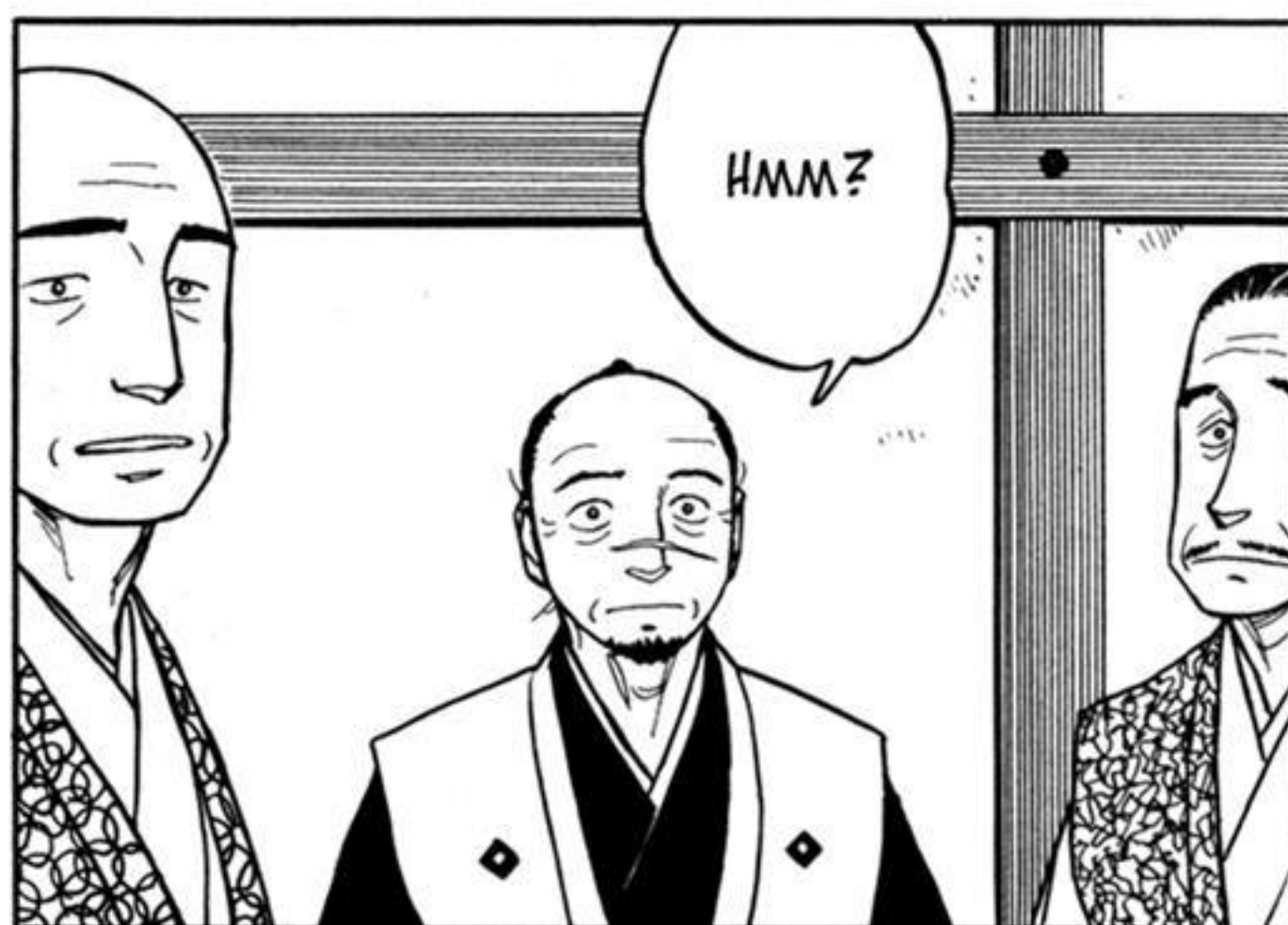


That being said,
the hour is already
late so I shall simply
state the location
for today and give
my reasons at the
next meeting.



Ahem...







Or to put it in harsher terms, we are weakening our lord's authority over his own clan.



At the same time, we are also defying the wishes of our lord.

Our ultimate objective is to show up the youngsters and retrieve some of our lost influence, but...



Yes...
But do you really think the former head of our clan would purposely want to limit the authority of his successor?



Well, it's nothing personal. All we wish is to have some say in important matters.



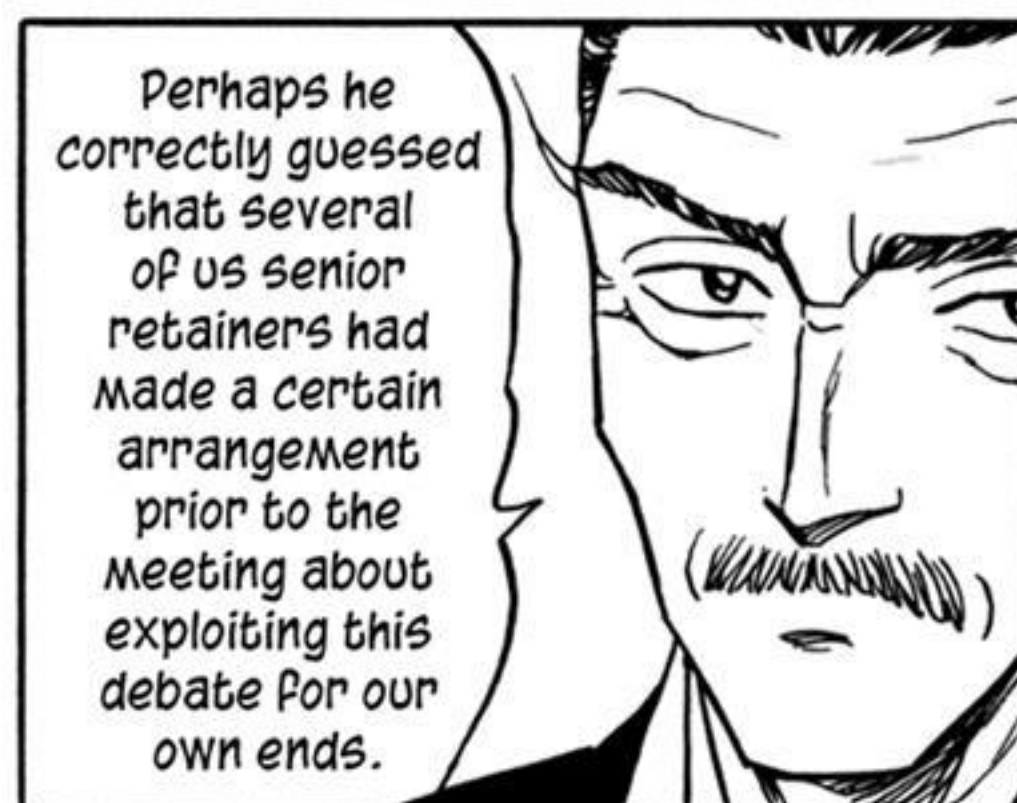
Only to withdraw it at the final moment and then say that upon further thought, Naizen's proposal is best.

Thus, he interfered by suggesting a proposal similar to ours. He could then use his influence to sway the other retainers to supporting his proposal,

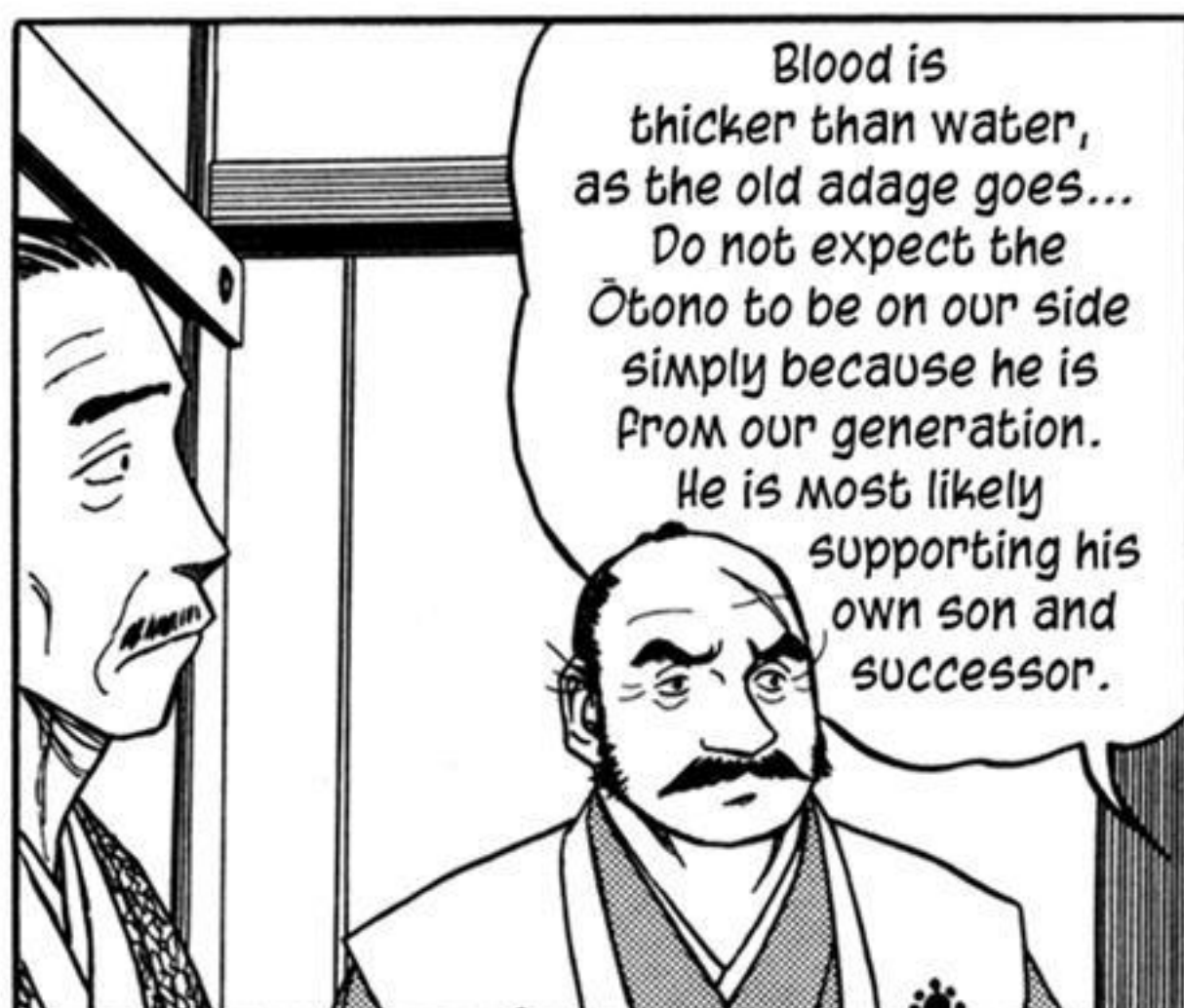
It can't be...

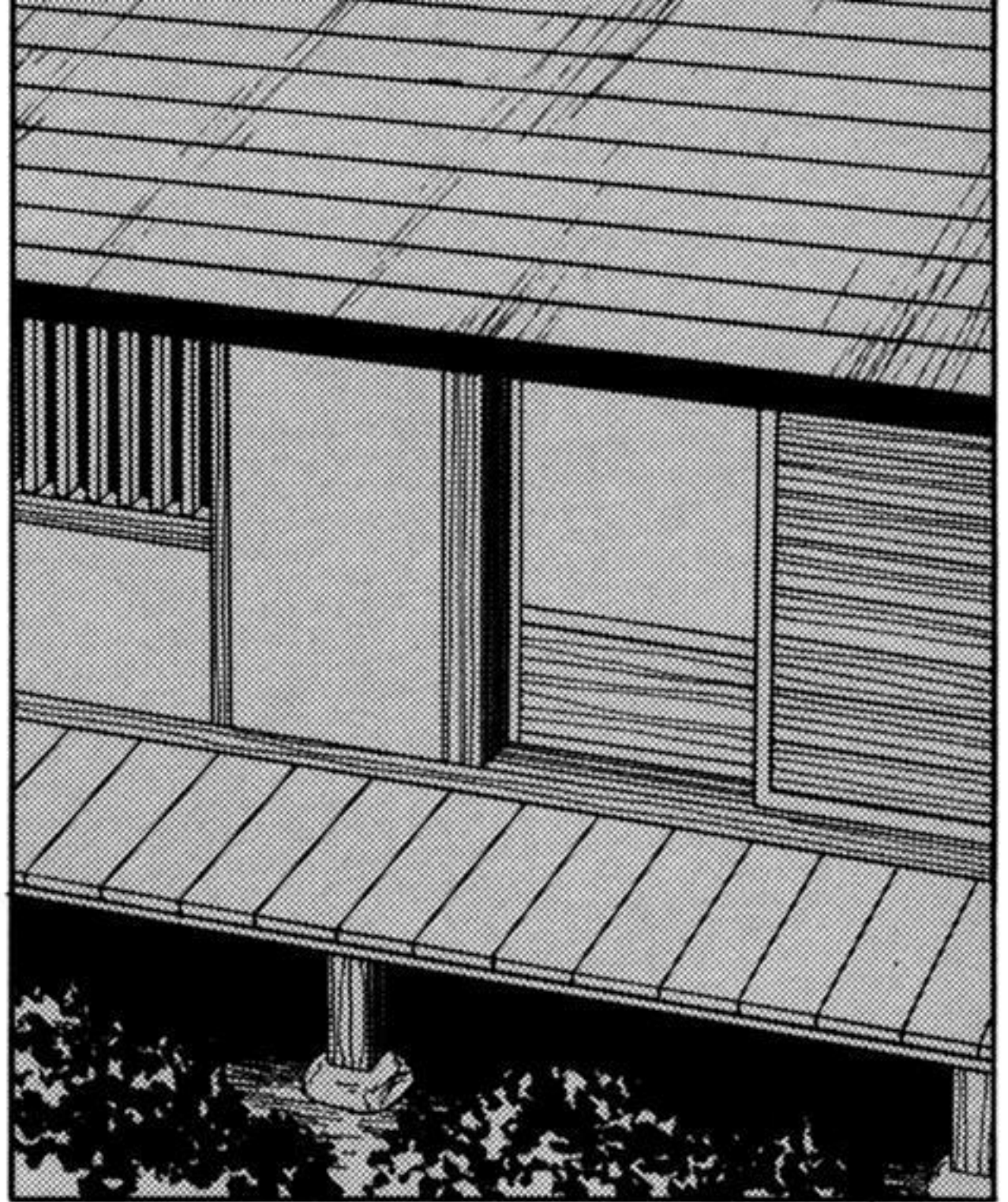


Then are you suggesting that the Ōtono's true intentions are...



Perhaps he correctly guessed that several of us senior retainers had made a certain arrangement prior to the meeting about exploiting this debate for our own ends.







Hmm... If this many labourers were to work for this many years... And the warehouse can store this much food and supplies... Huh? Ugh... this is so hard to calculate!



Still, I've got to churn out some estimate figures to make a proper case...

The land survey for our domain isn't complete yet, so I can't say with any absolute certainty, but... I have a strong feeling Kajiwara's proposal will bankrupt our clan.



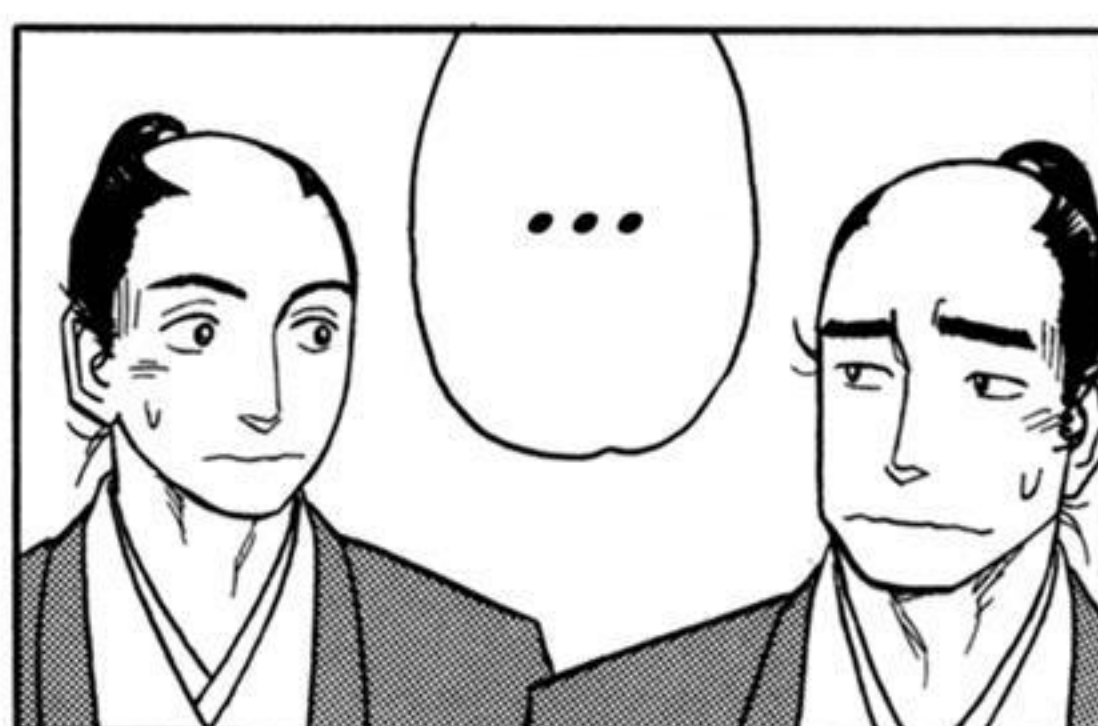
It's a good thing the Ōtono interrupted when he did... He sure saved us back then, which must have been his intention...



Not only that, I'd have to explain it in a way that even men with only war on their minds can understand...



Alright, then! Gotta keep working!

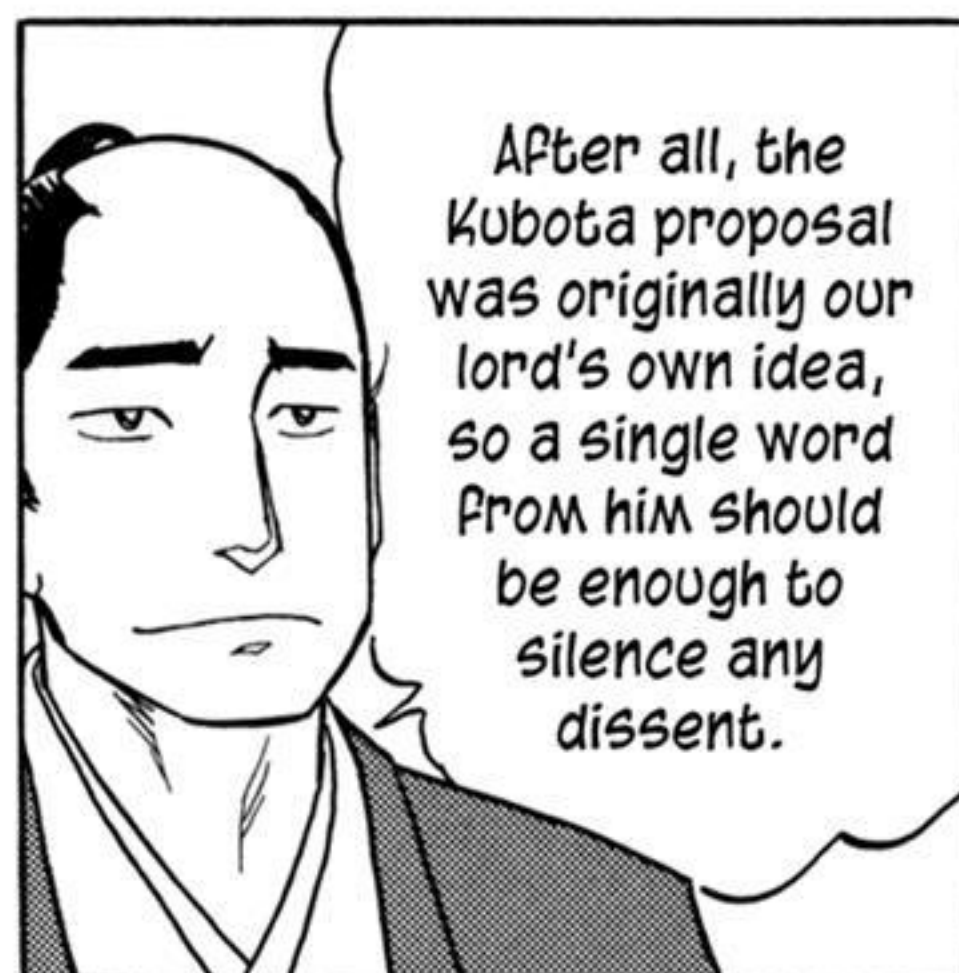




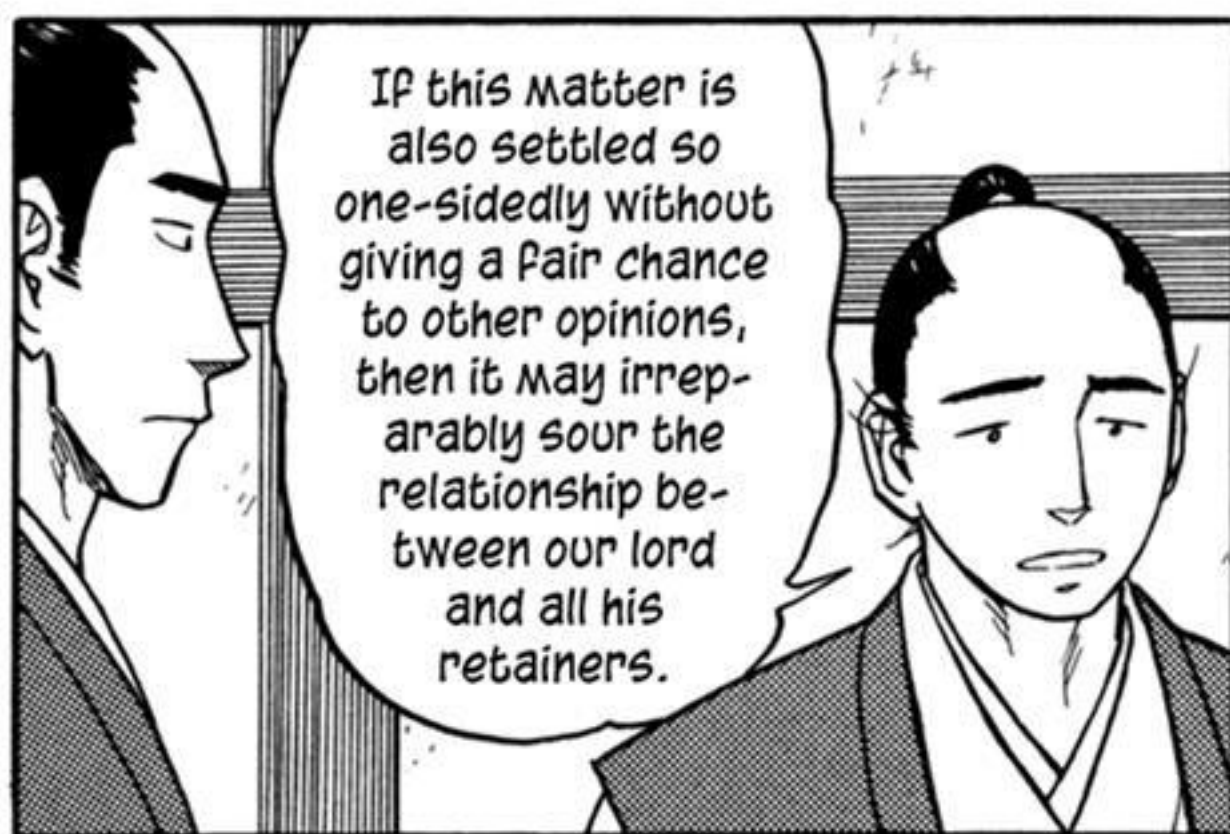
No...
I actually
requested
our lord to
refrain from
doing so.



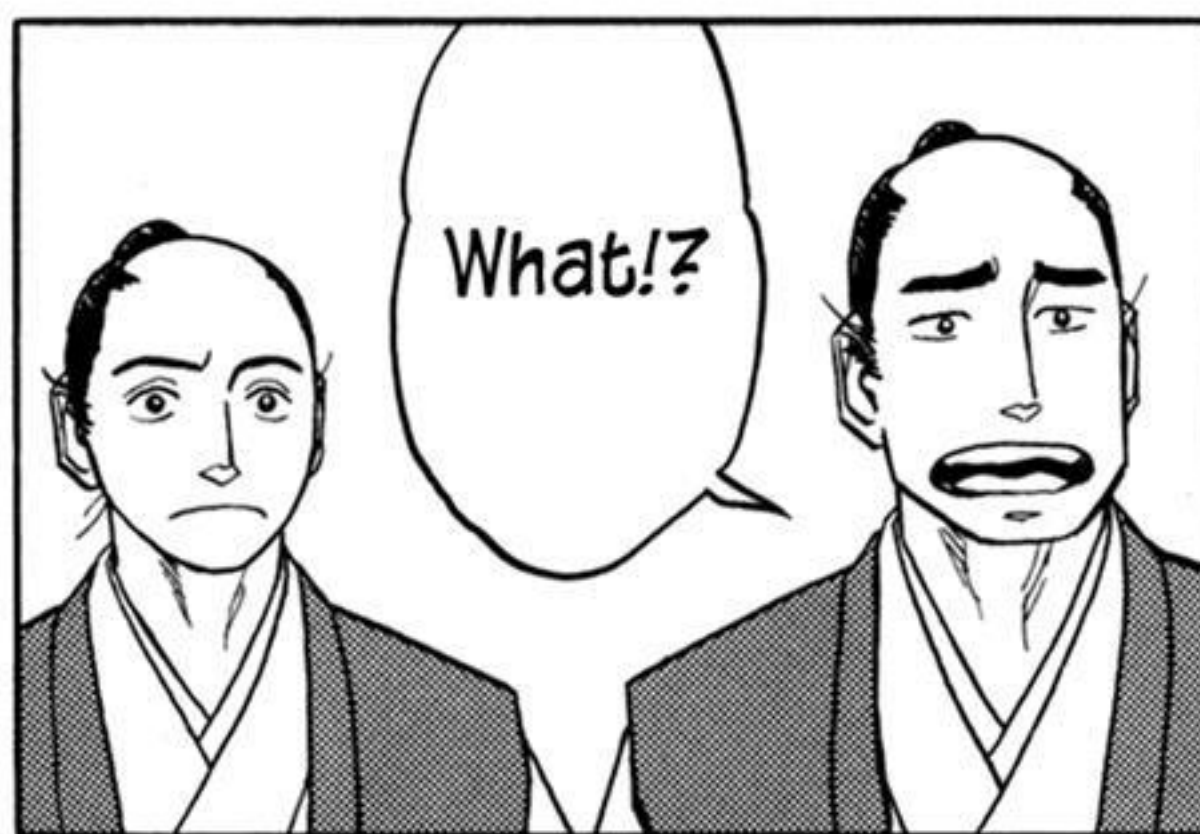
Exactly!



After all, the
Kubota proposal
was originally our
lord's own idea,
so a single word
from him should
be enough to
silence any
dissent.



If this matter is
also settled so
one-sidedly without
giving a fair chance
to other opinions,
then it may irrep-
arably sour the
relationship be-
tween our lord
and all his
retainers.



What!?



Another
Sekigahara,
huh...







Absolutely! My proposal cannot be left on the table when another location, superior to mine in every way, has been proposed!



But Kajiwara, many retainers were quite enthusiastic about your proposal last time. Is there really a need to withdraw it now?



Hmm...?



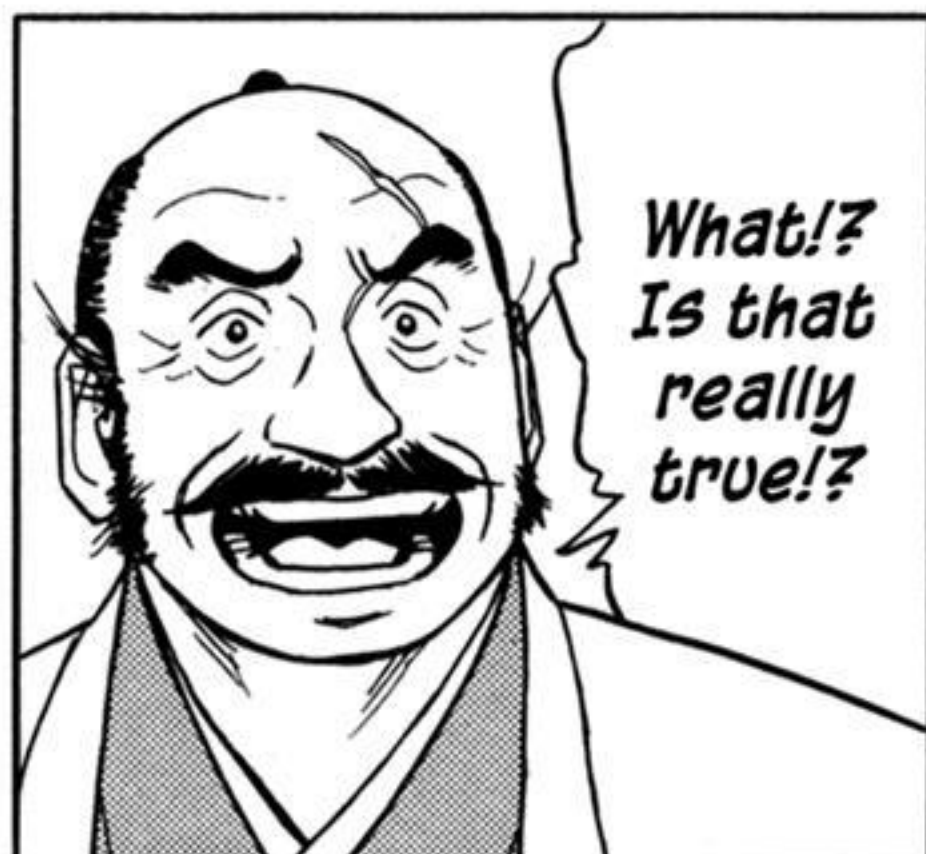
I am awed by your deep insight and wisdom!



Ôtono!



As Shibue Naizen feared, building the castle at Kanazawa would consume far too much time and resources.

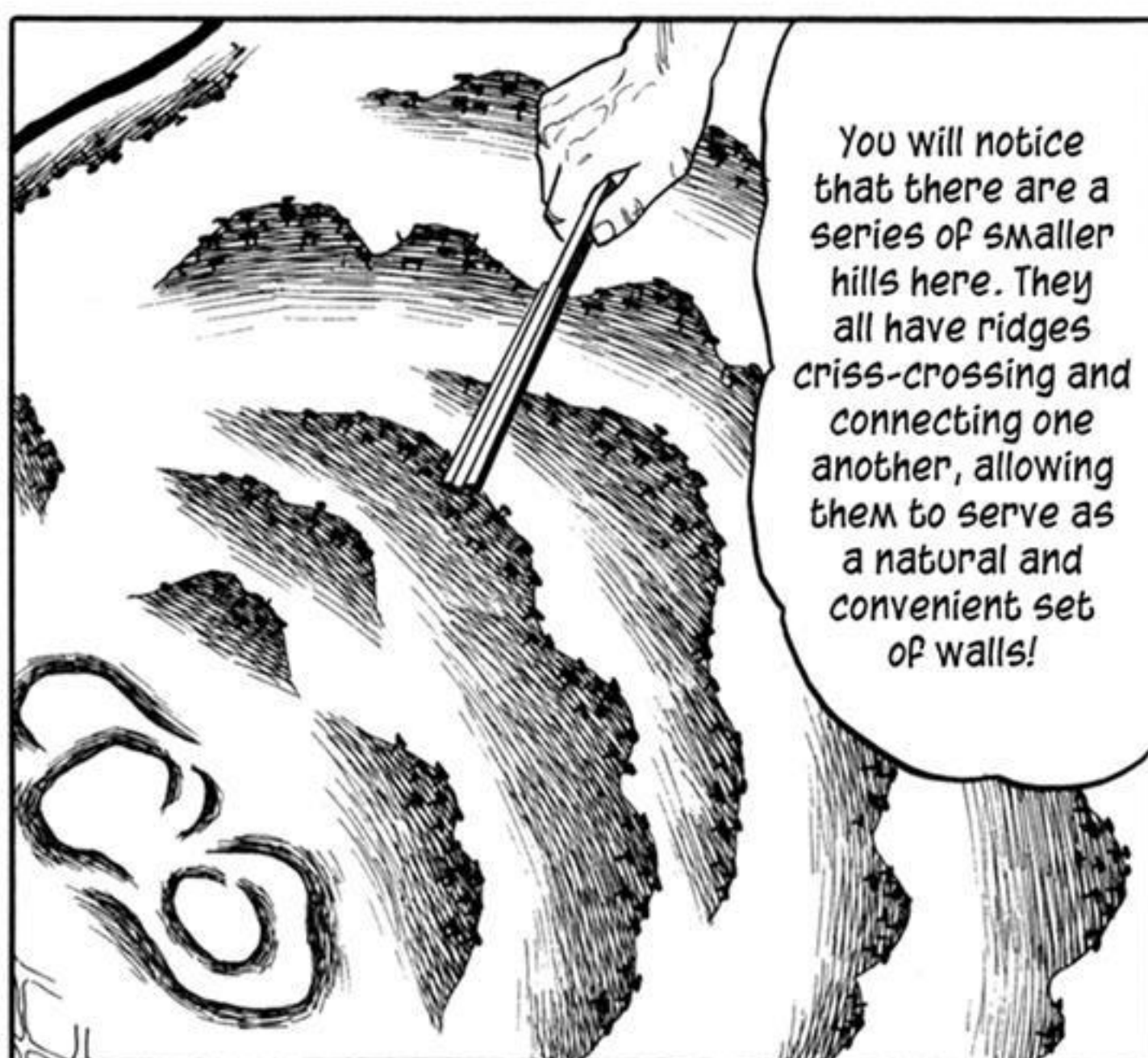


What!?! Is that really true!?!?

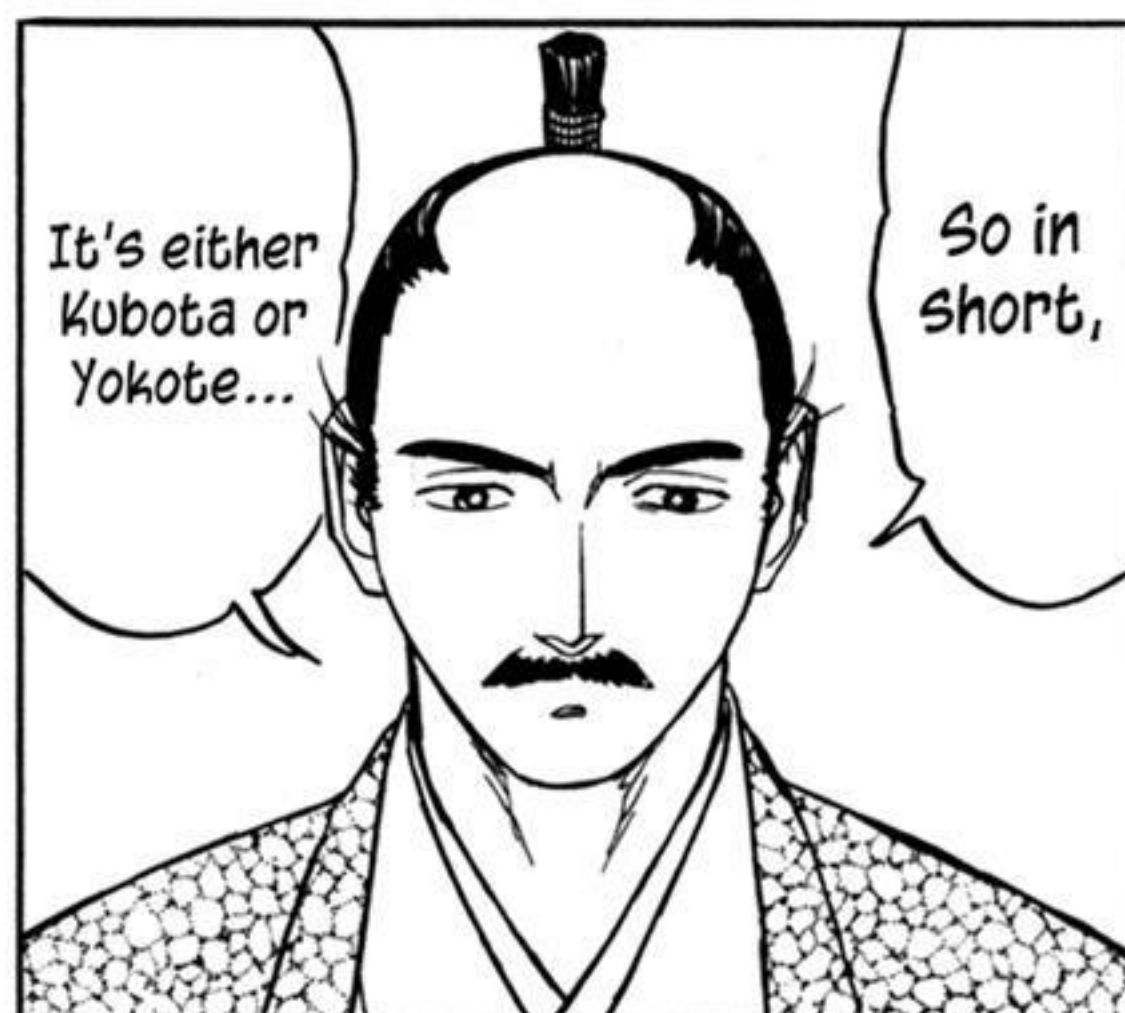
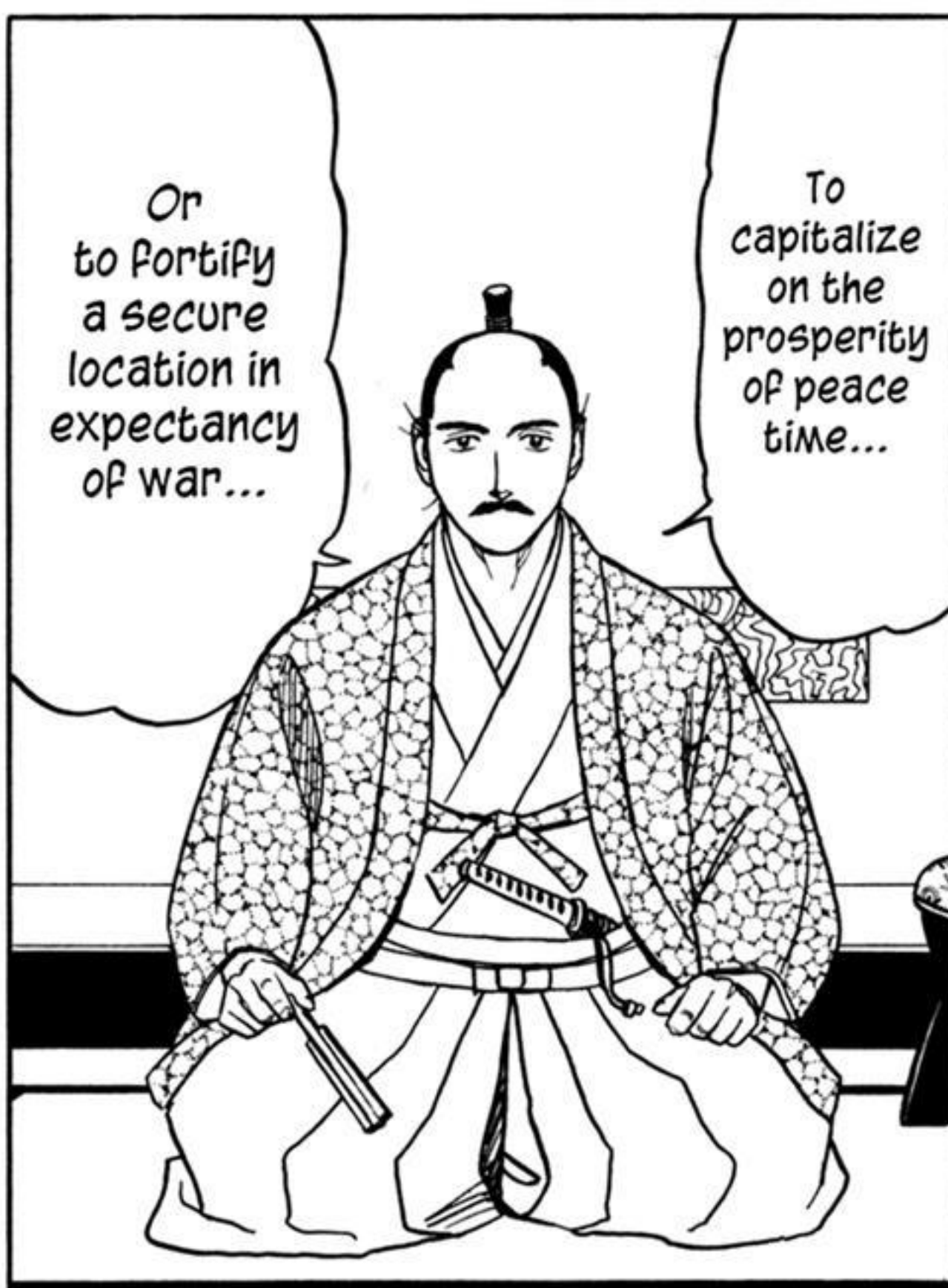
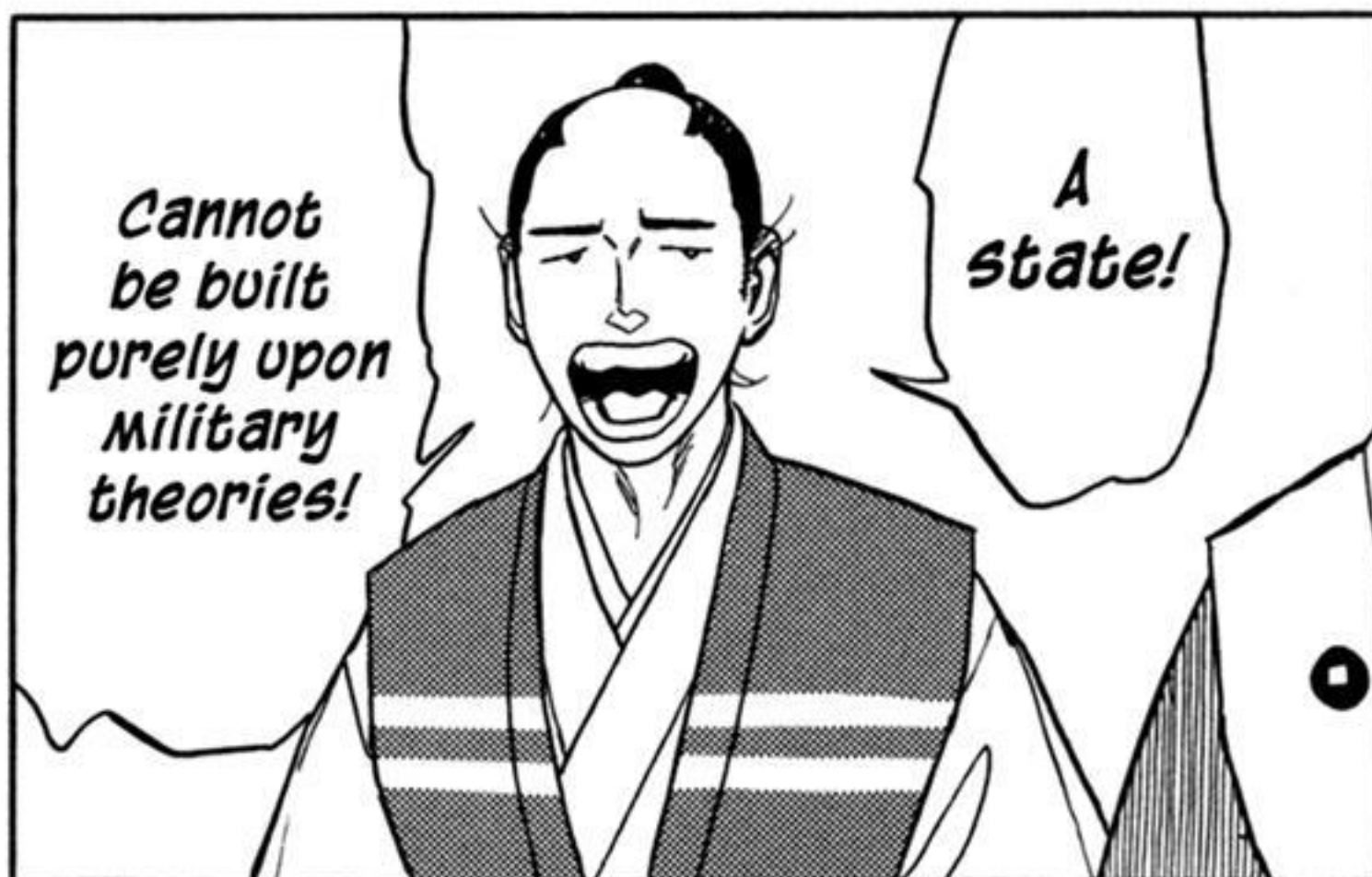


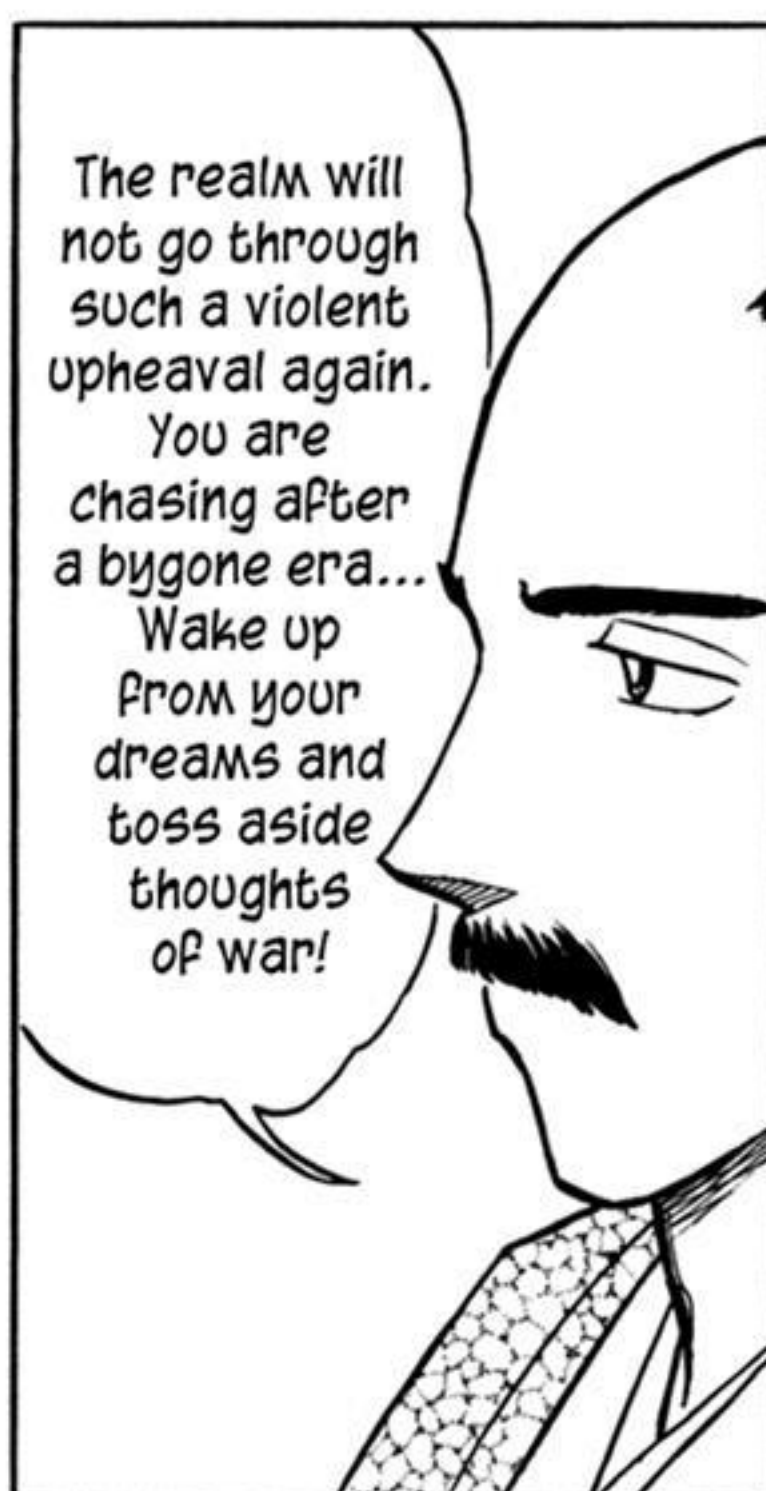
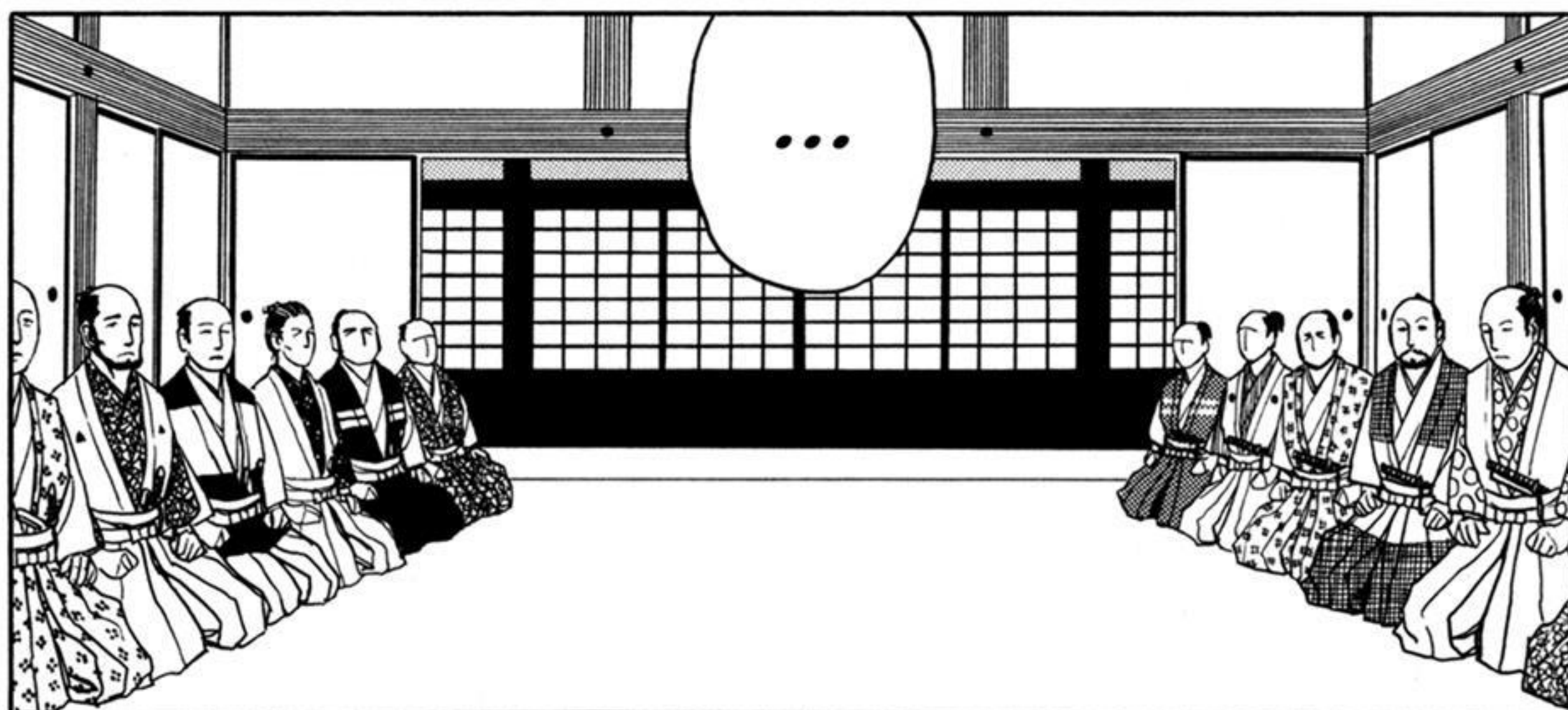
On the other hand, Yokote already has the perfect topography to serve as a large castle!

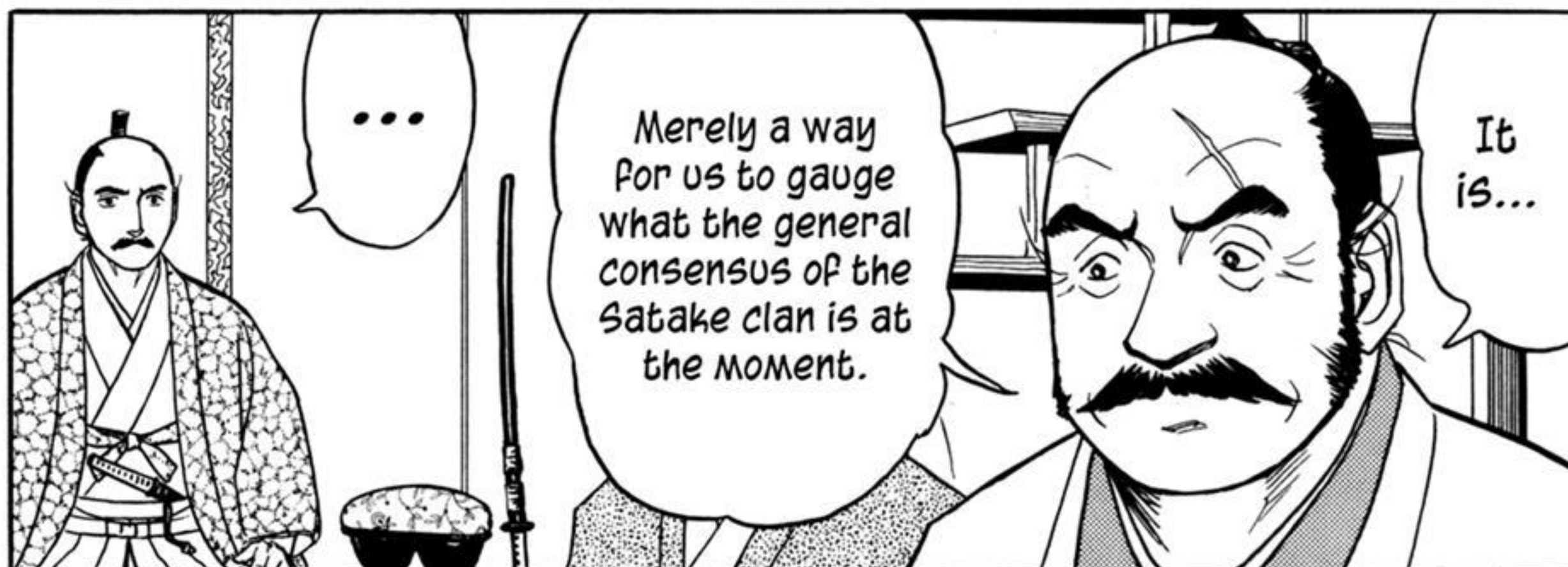


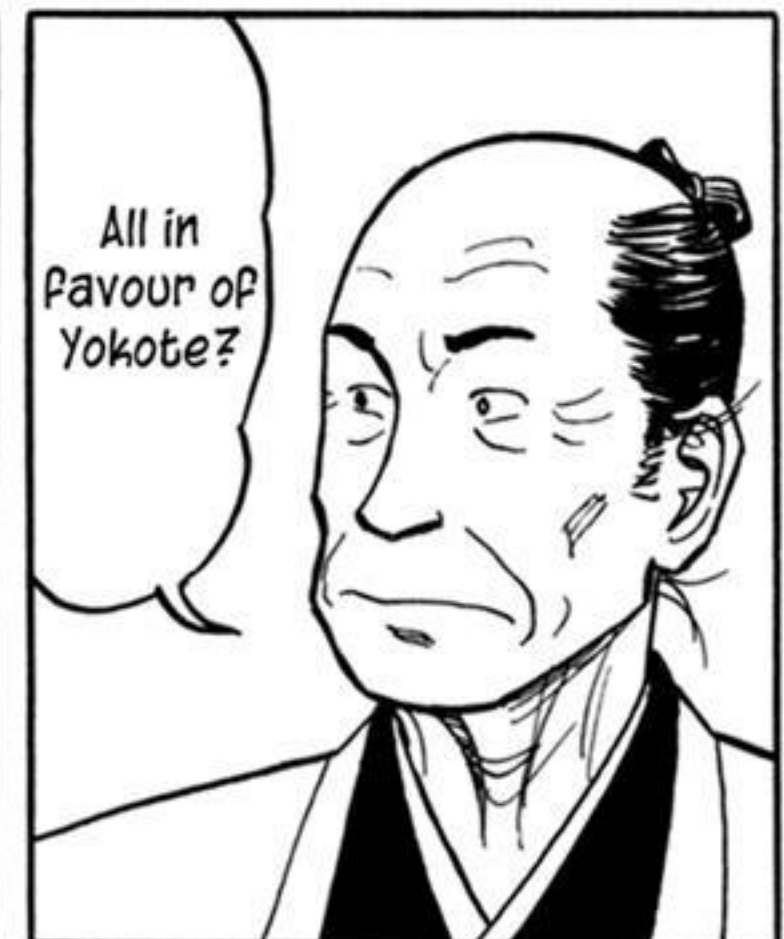




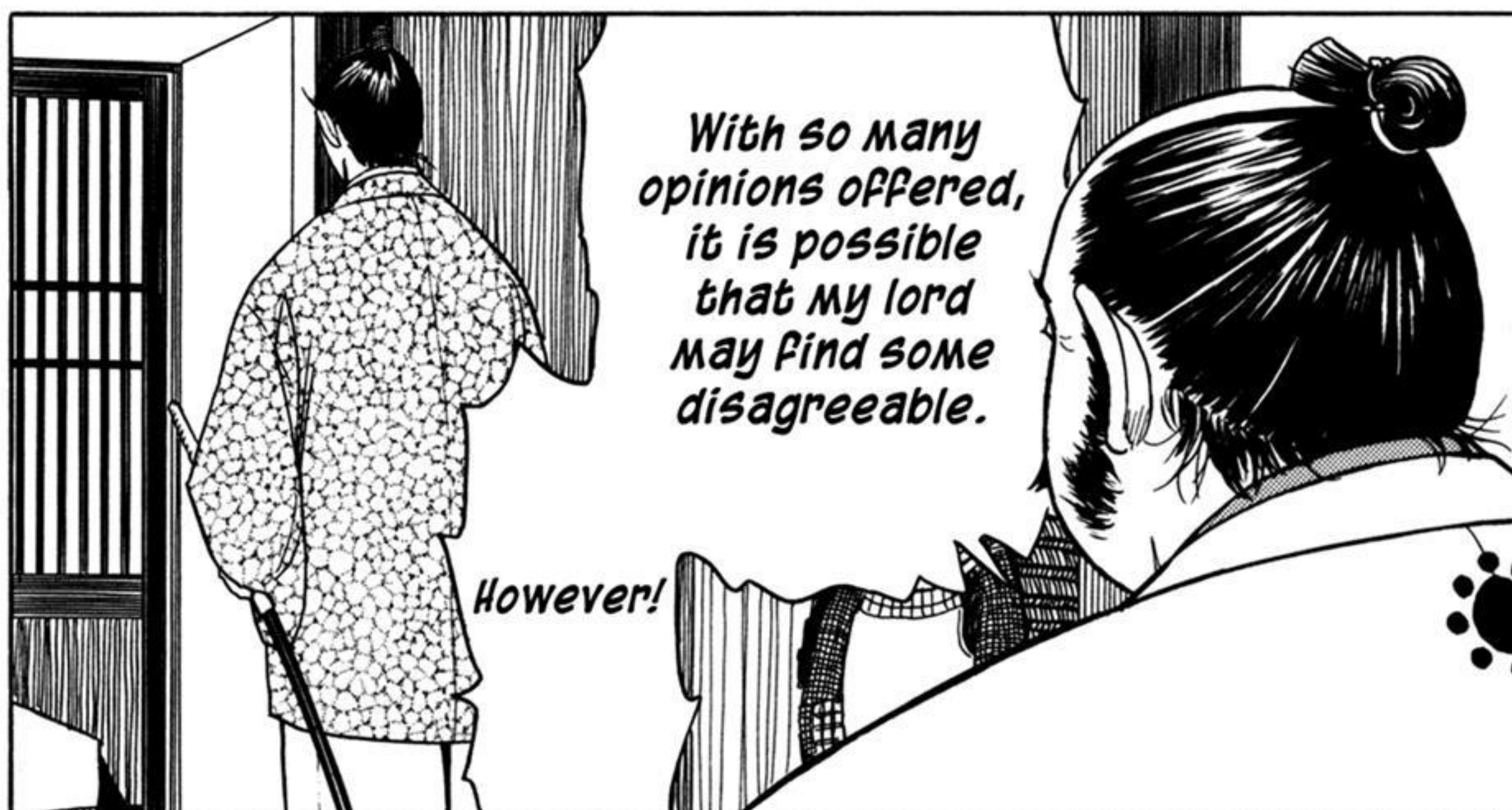




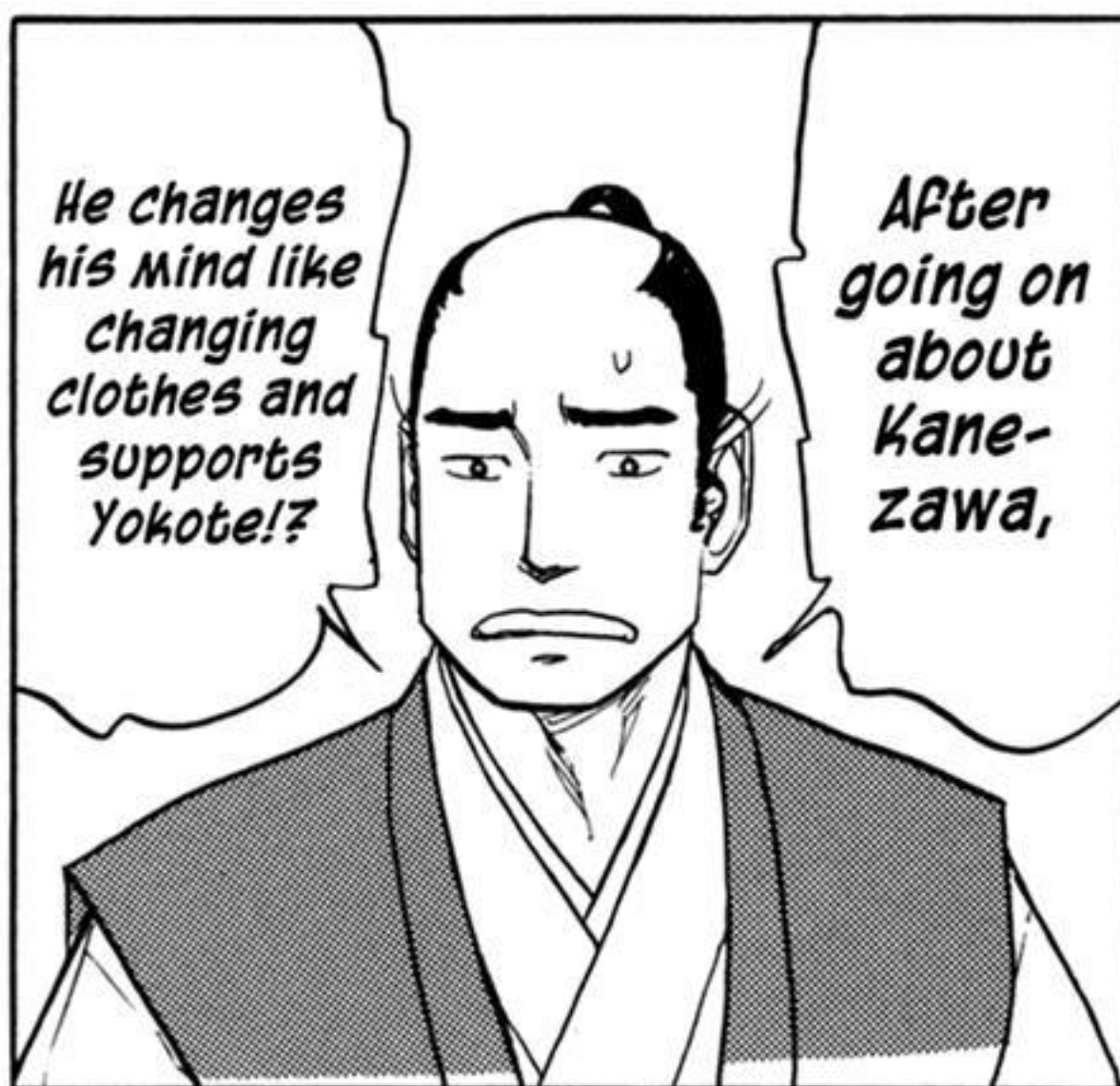








Yokote is confirmed as the site of the Satake clan's new main castle





I don't quite understand it myself either.



What do you mean?



Something inconsistent about their actions...

There's ...



G-Good afternoon, sir...

!

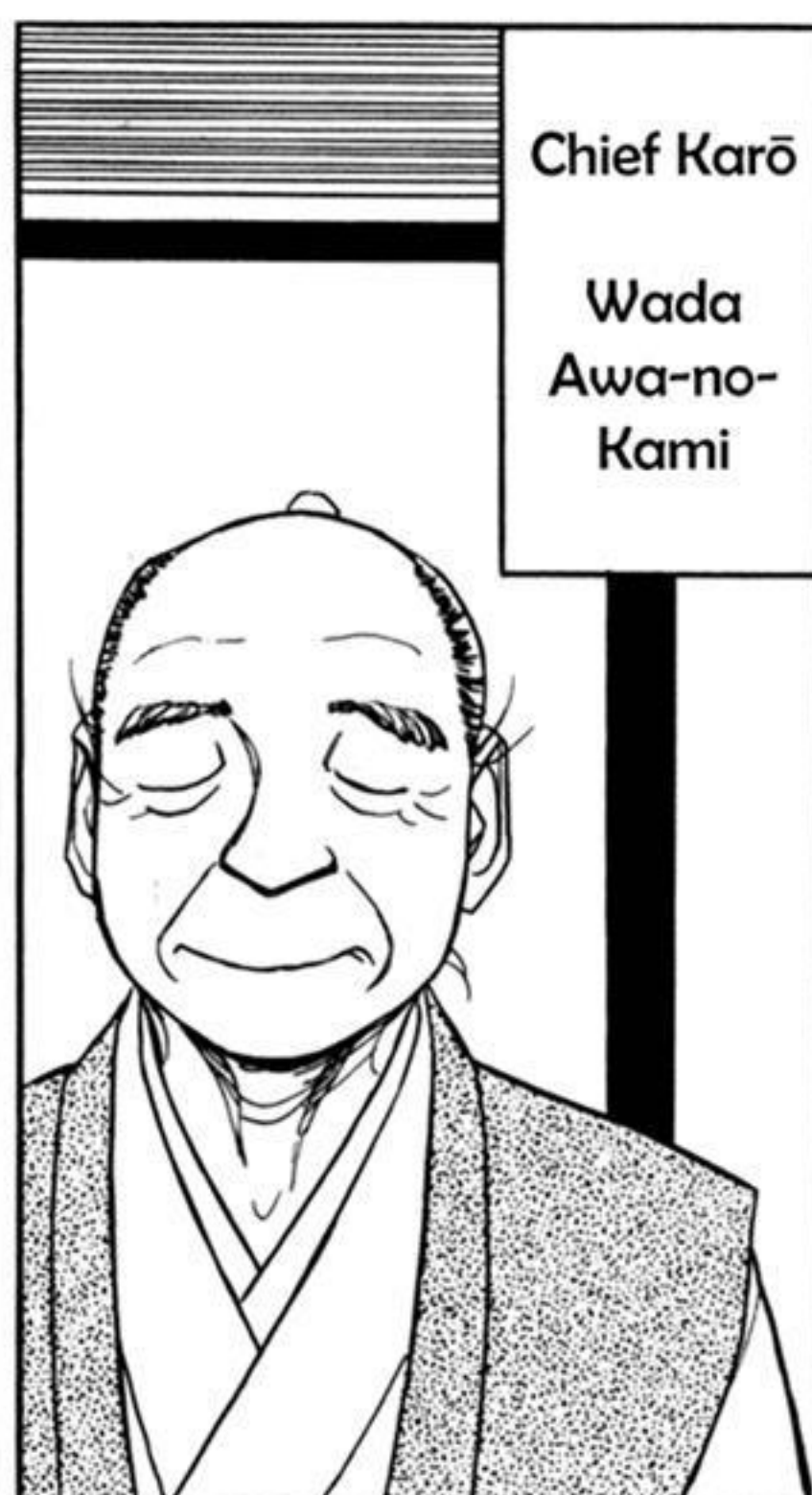


You really cannot understand, Naizen...?



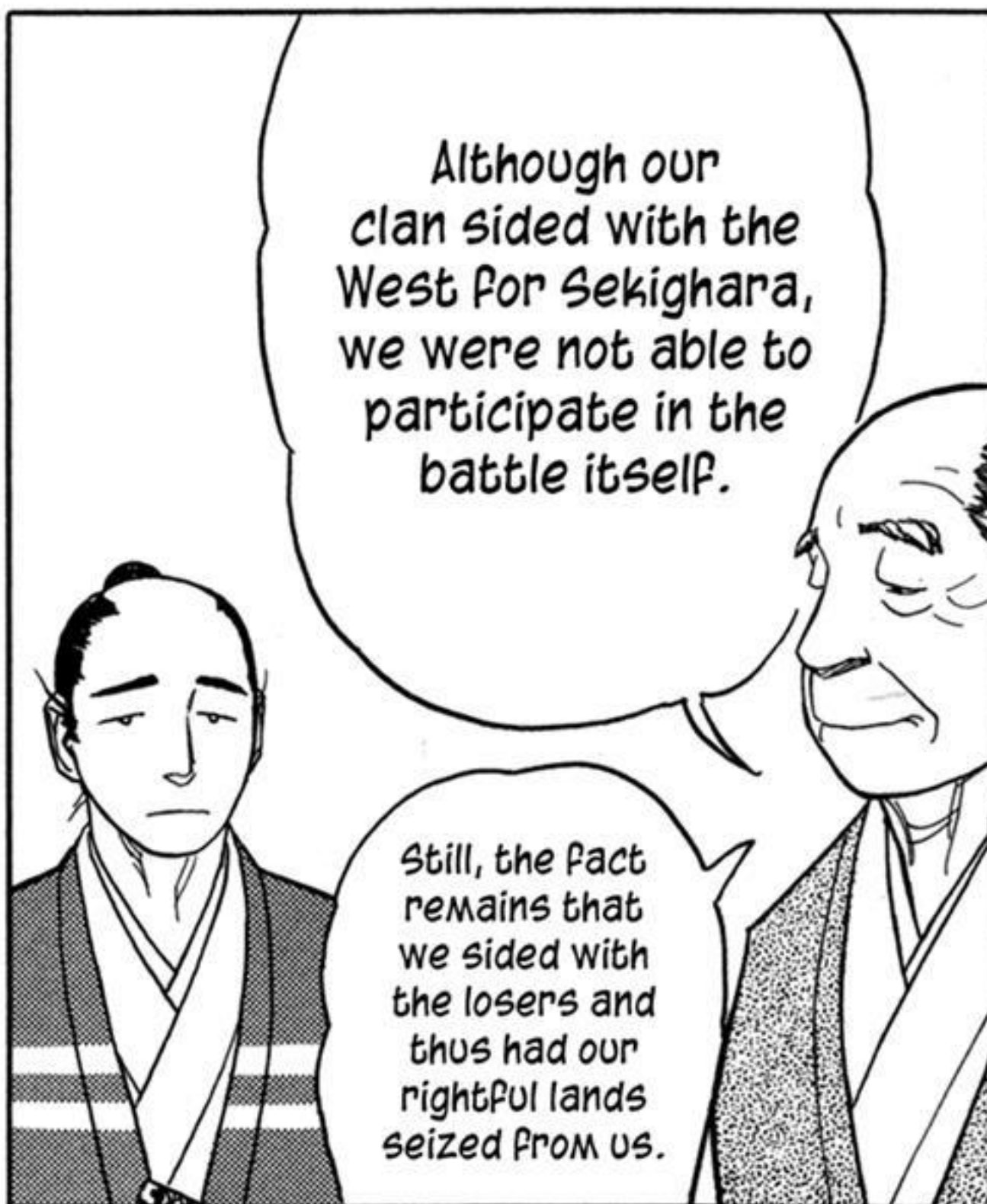
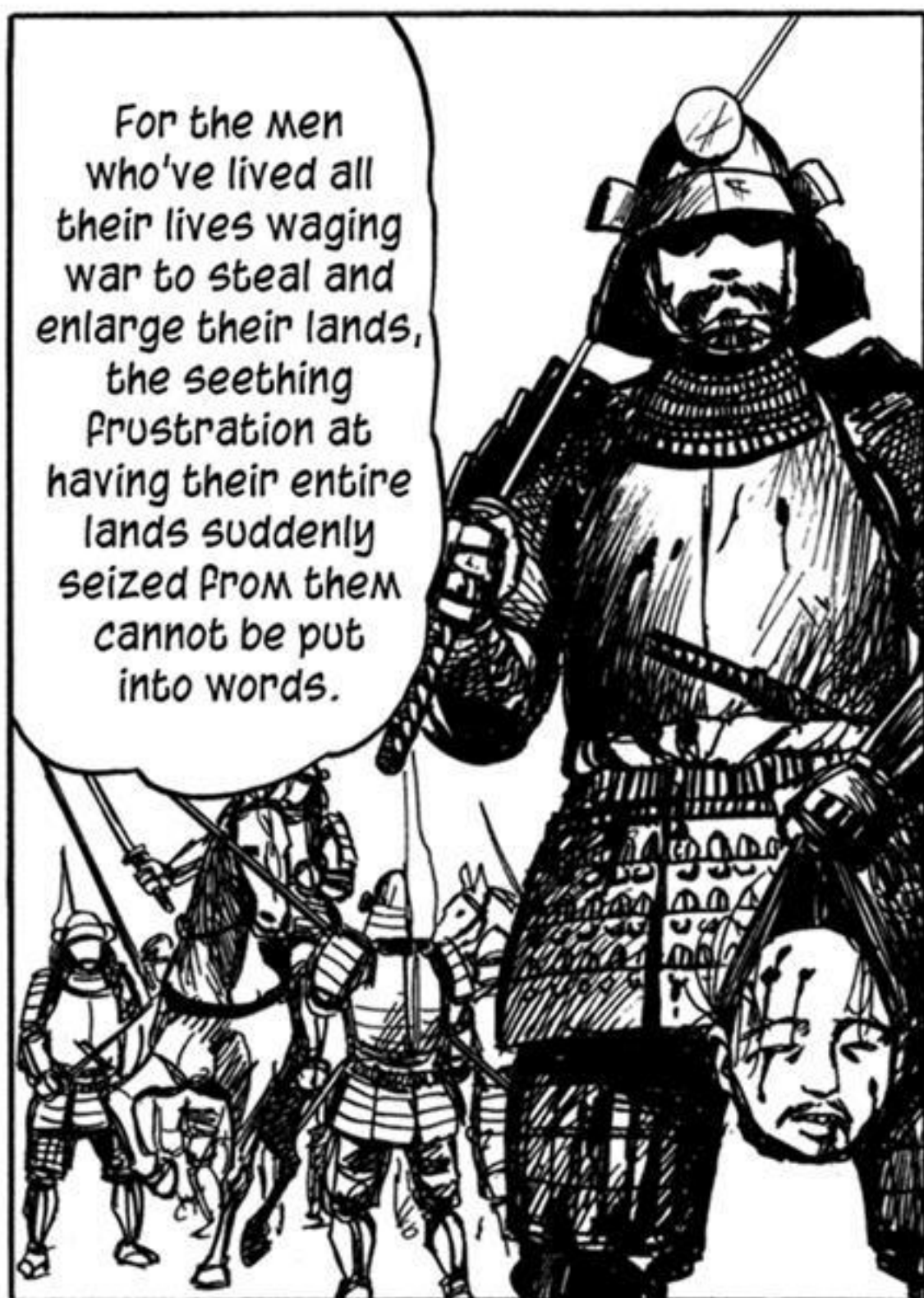
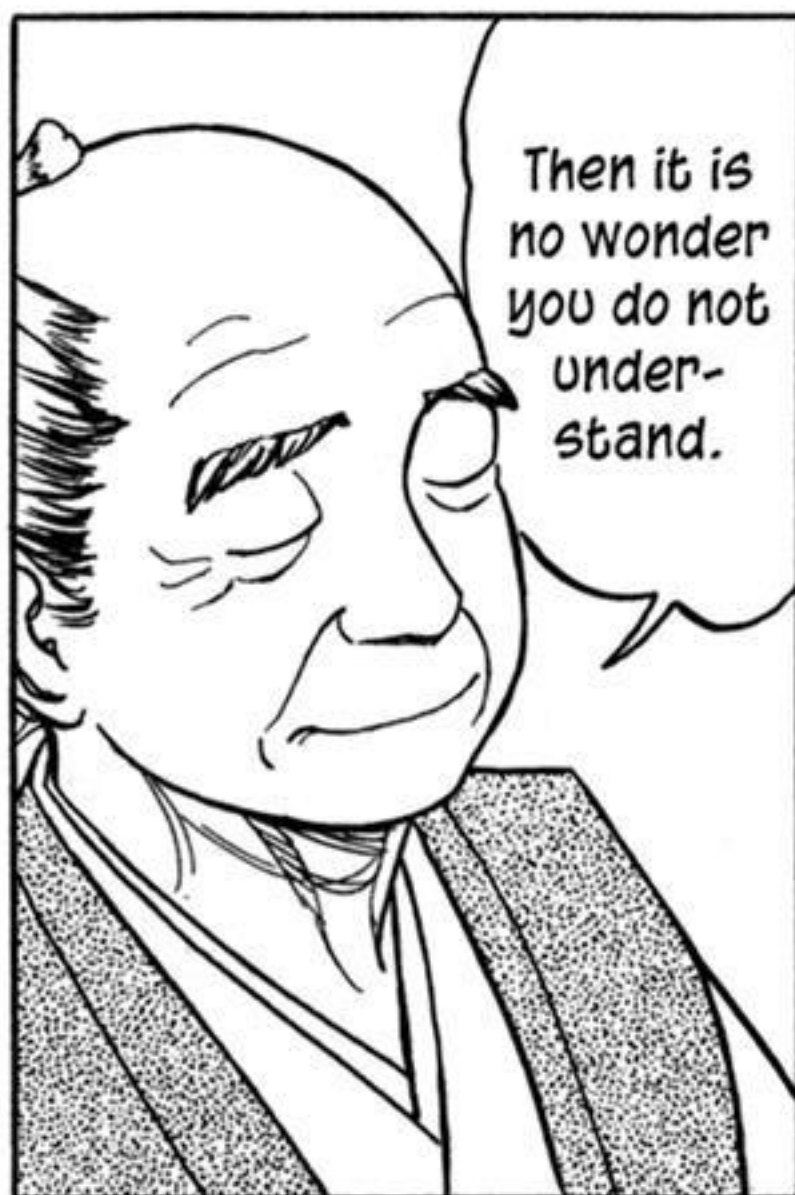
And you think you can protect our lord like this...?

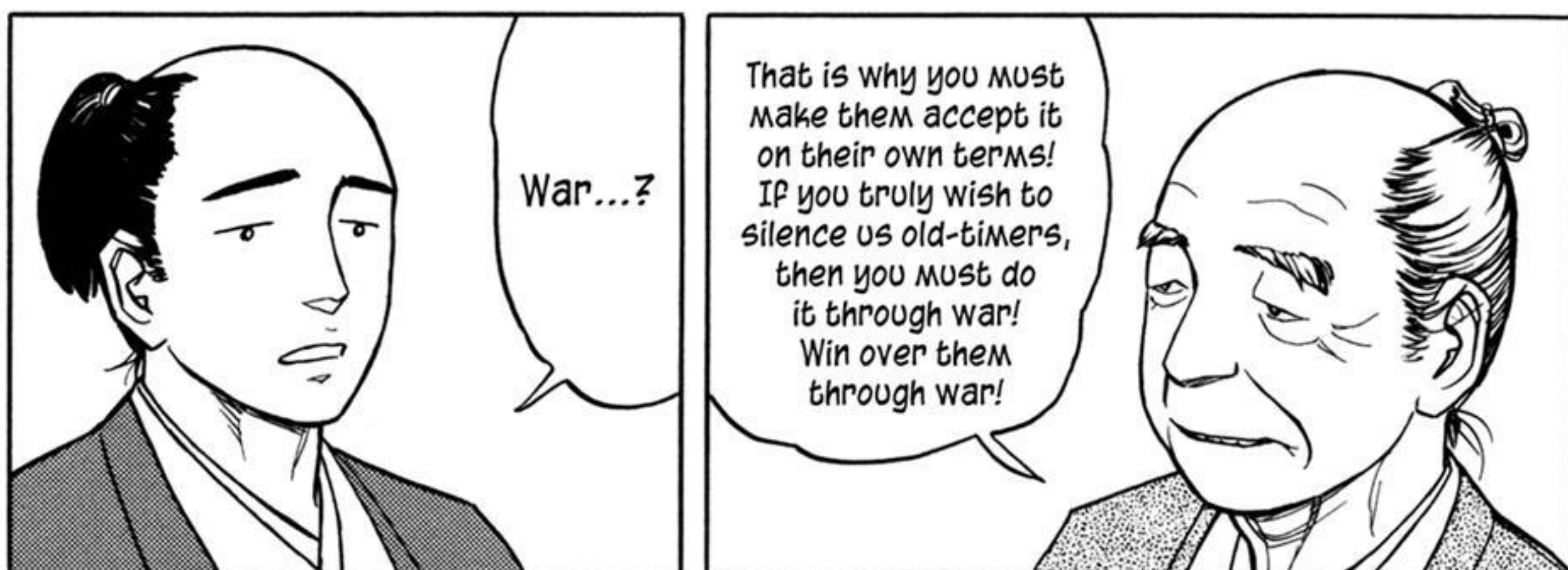
Well, I...

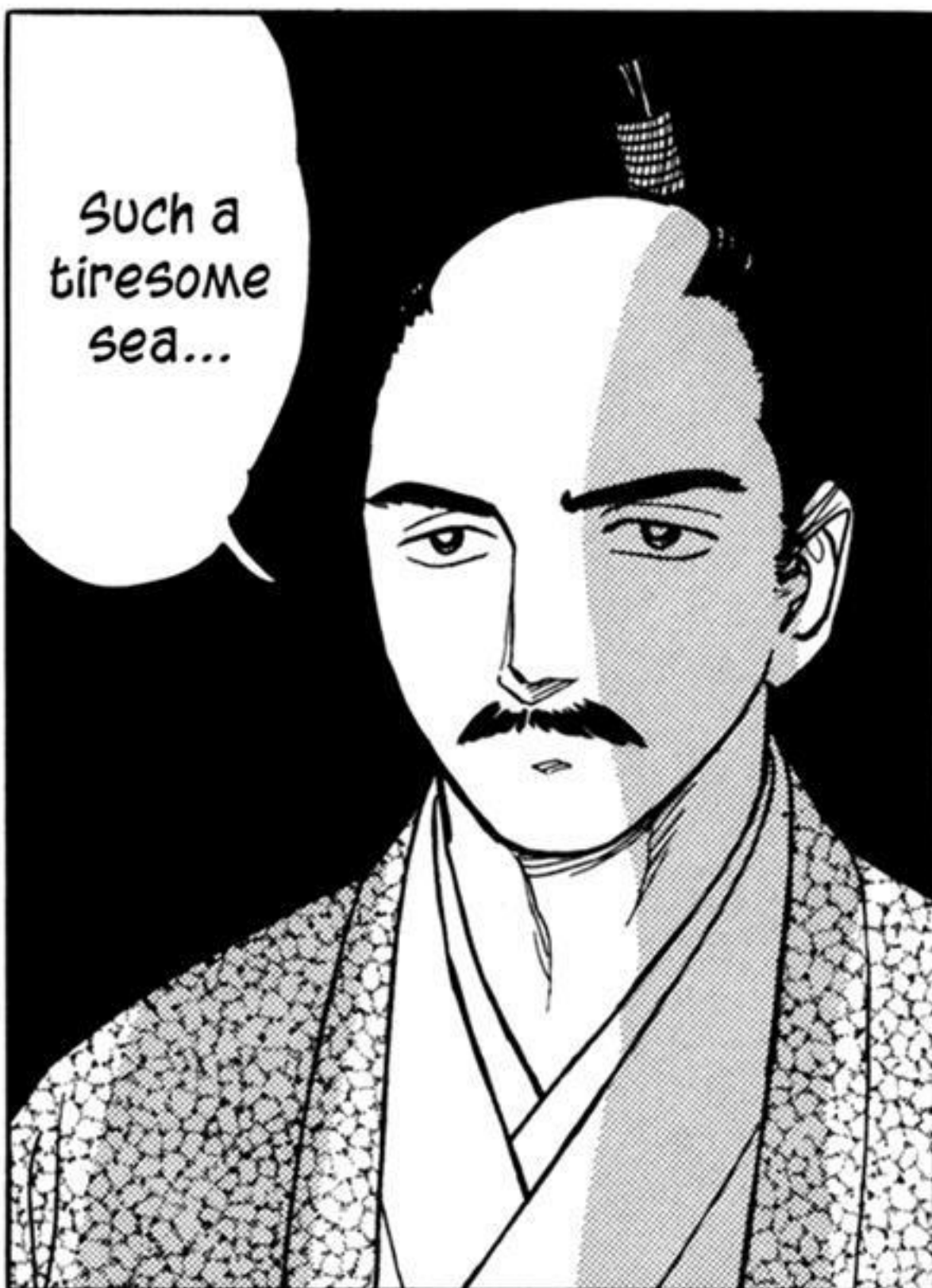
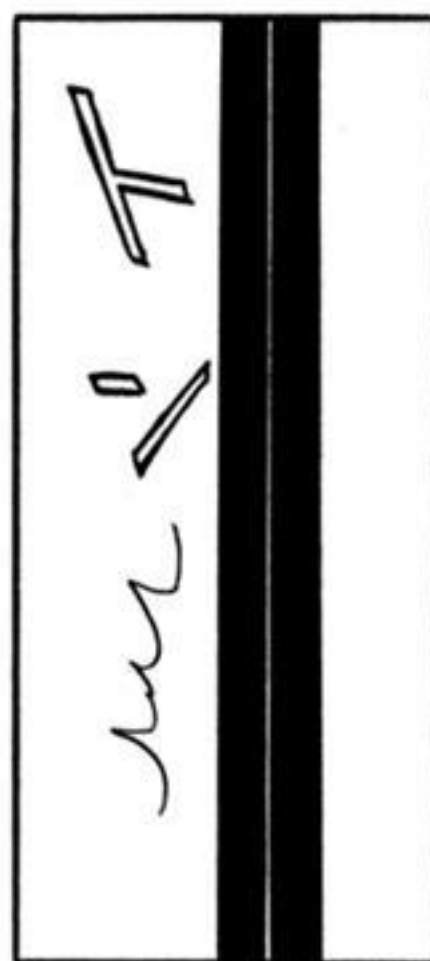
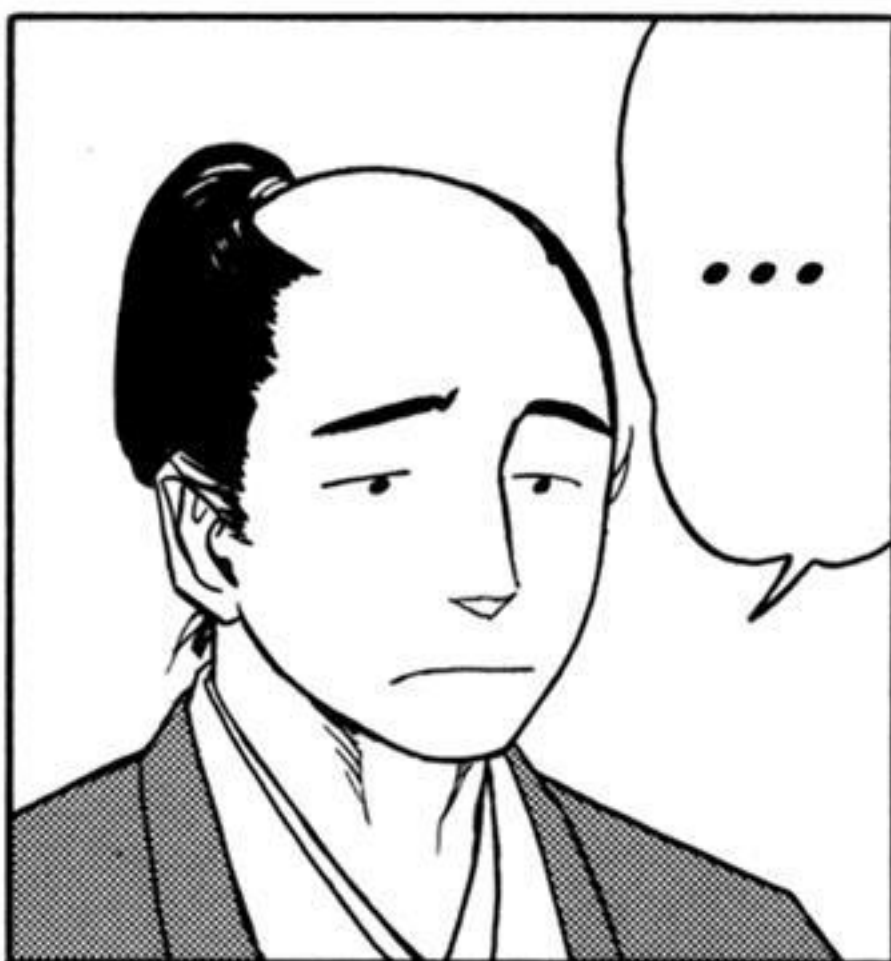
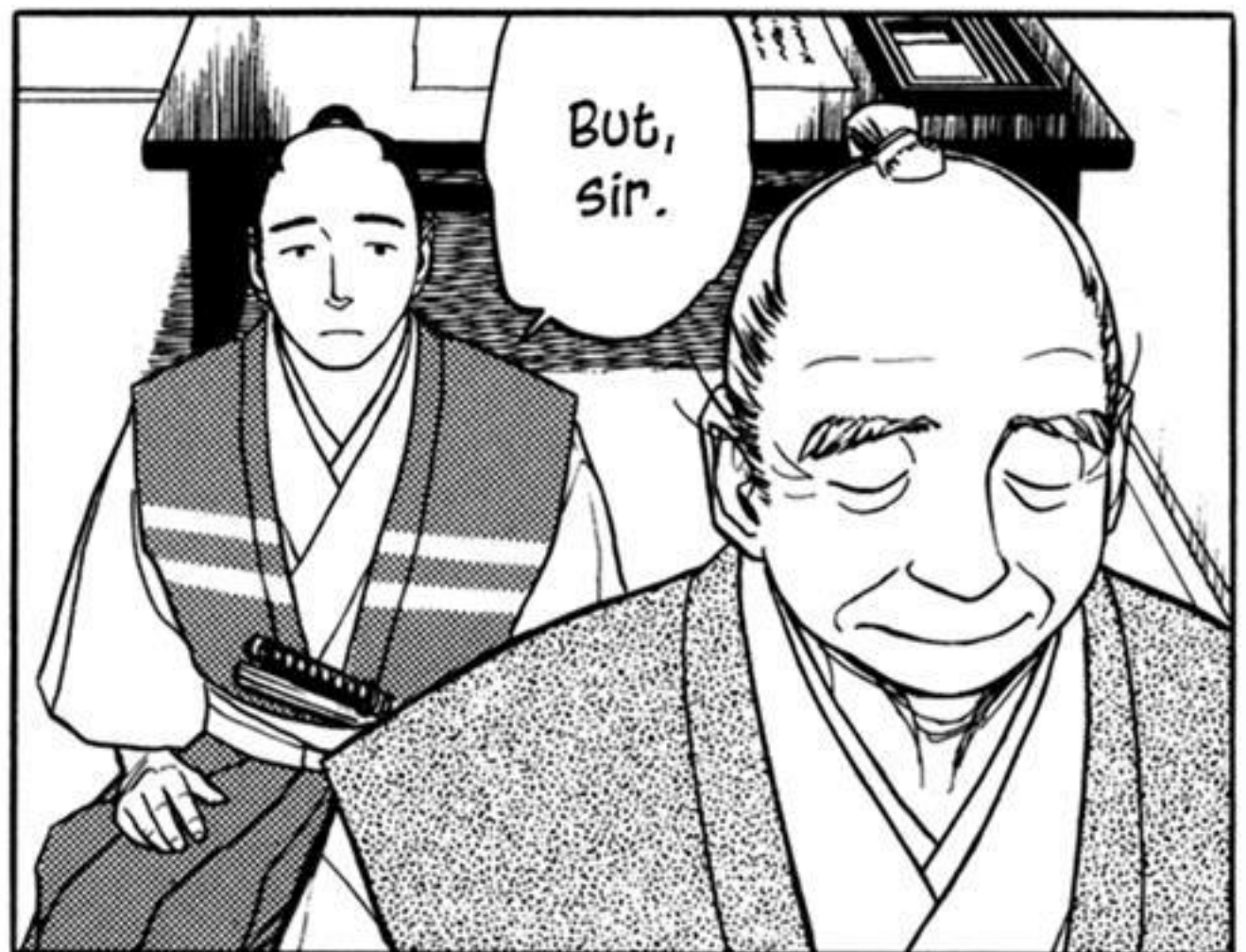


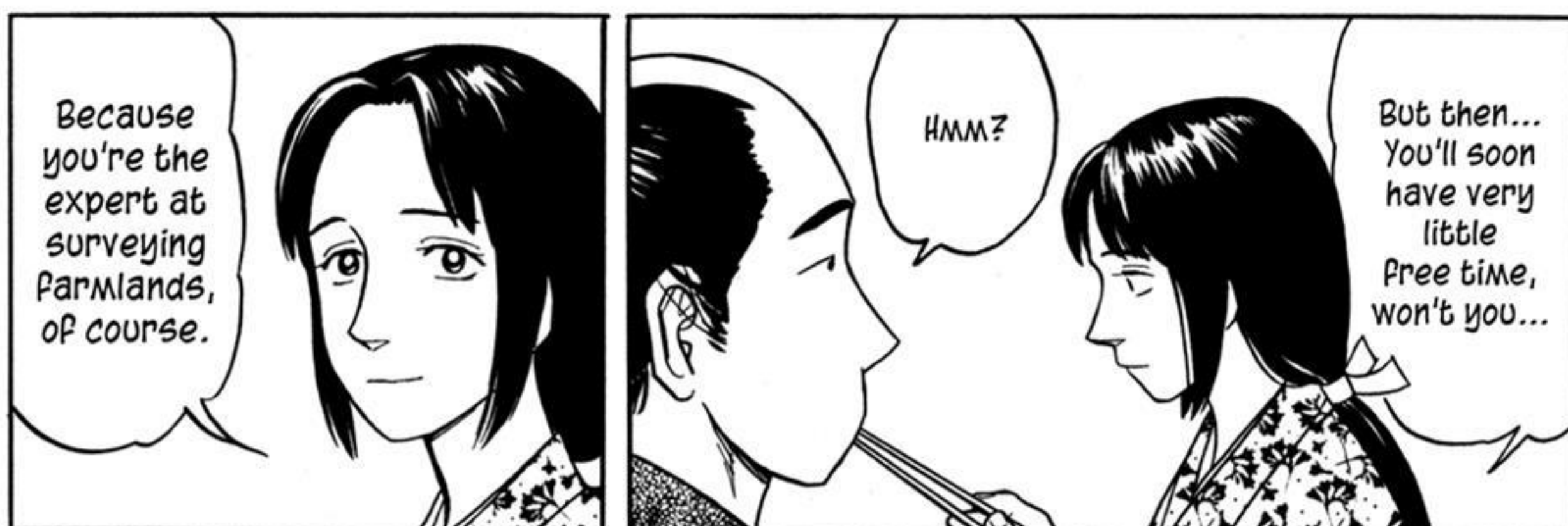
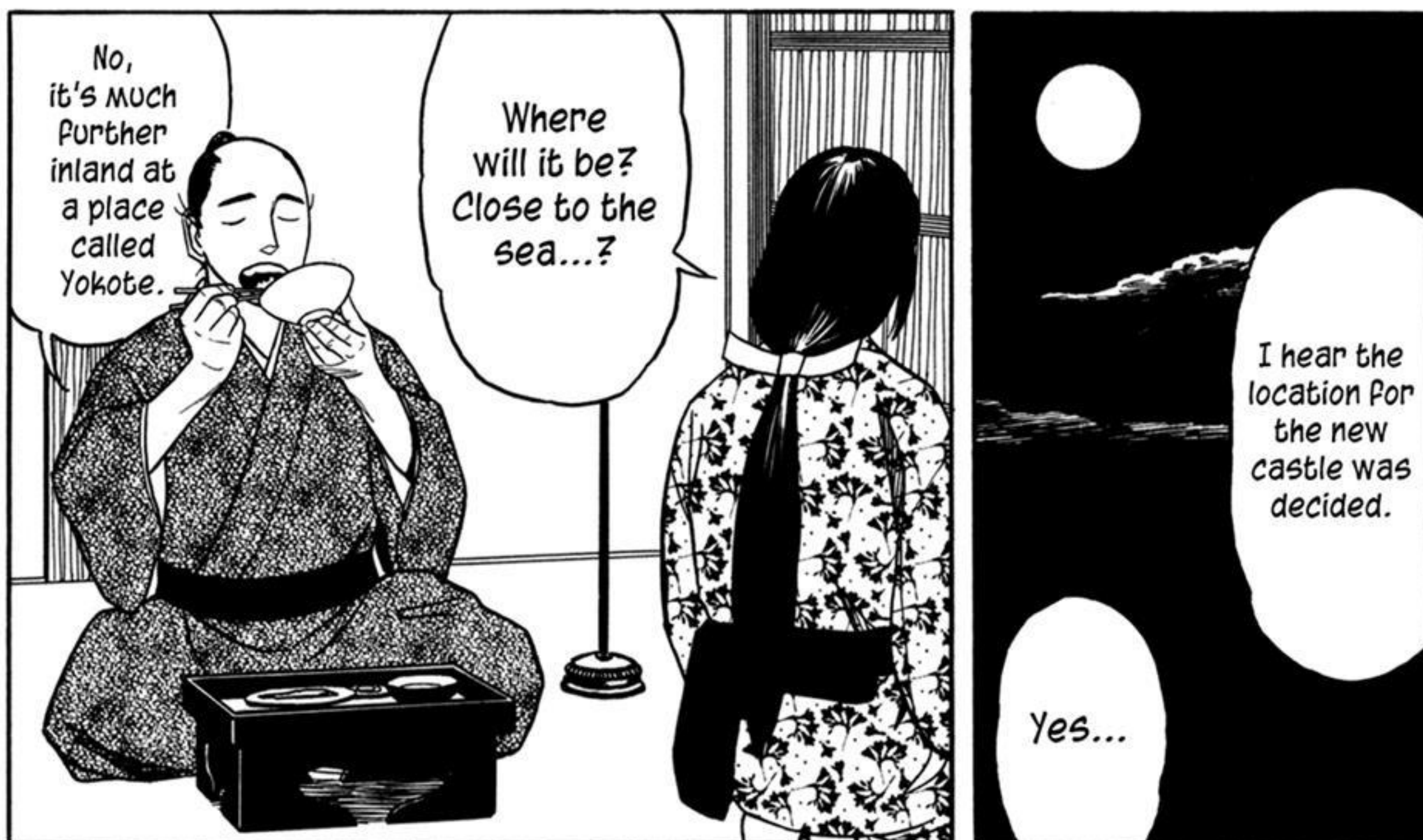
Chief Karō

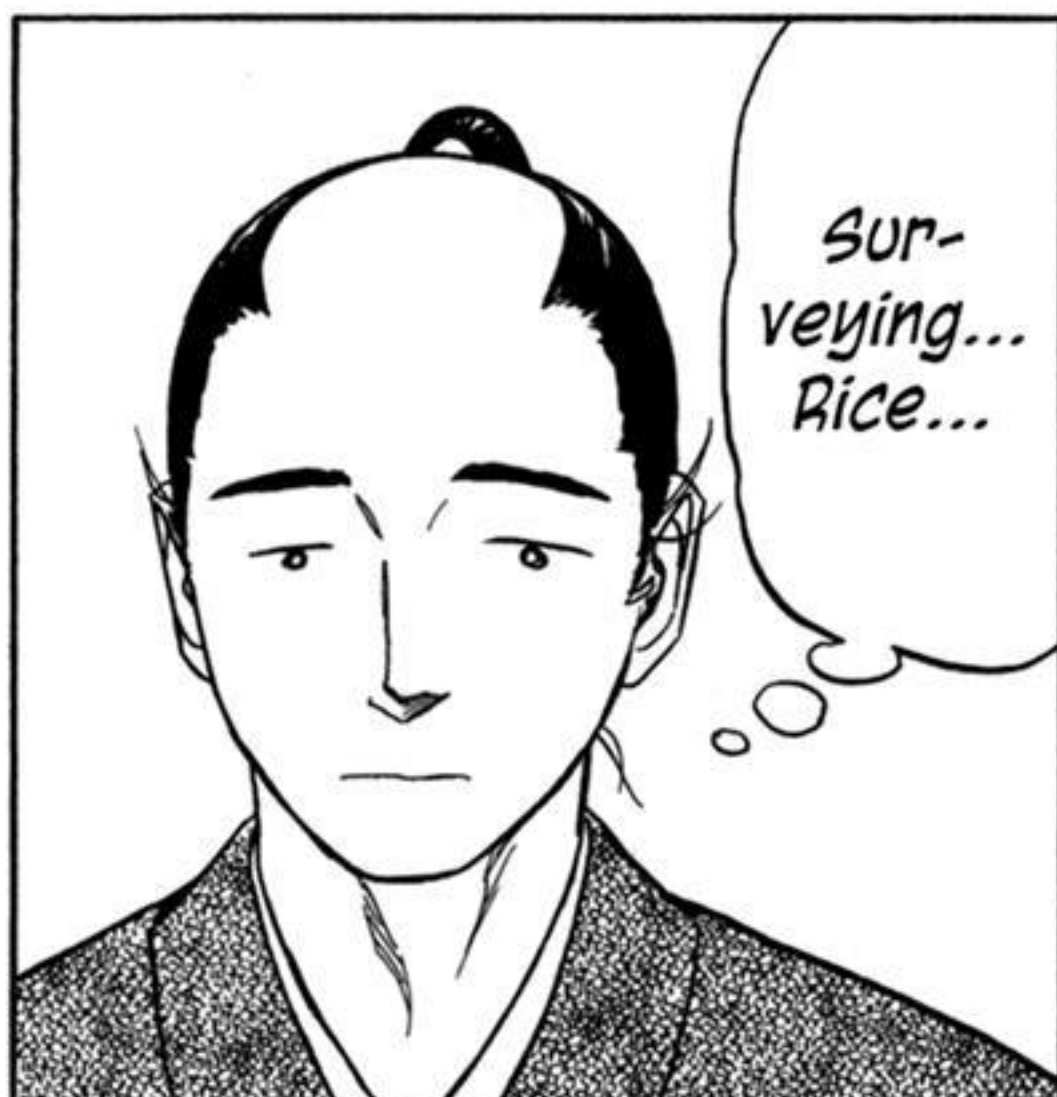
Wada Awa-no-Kami

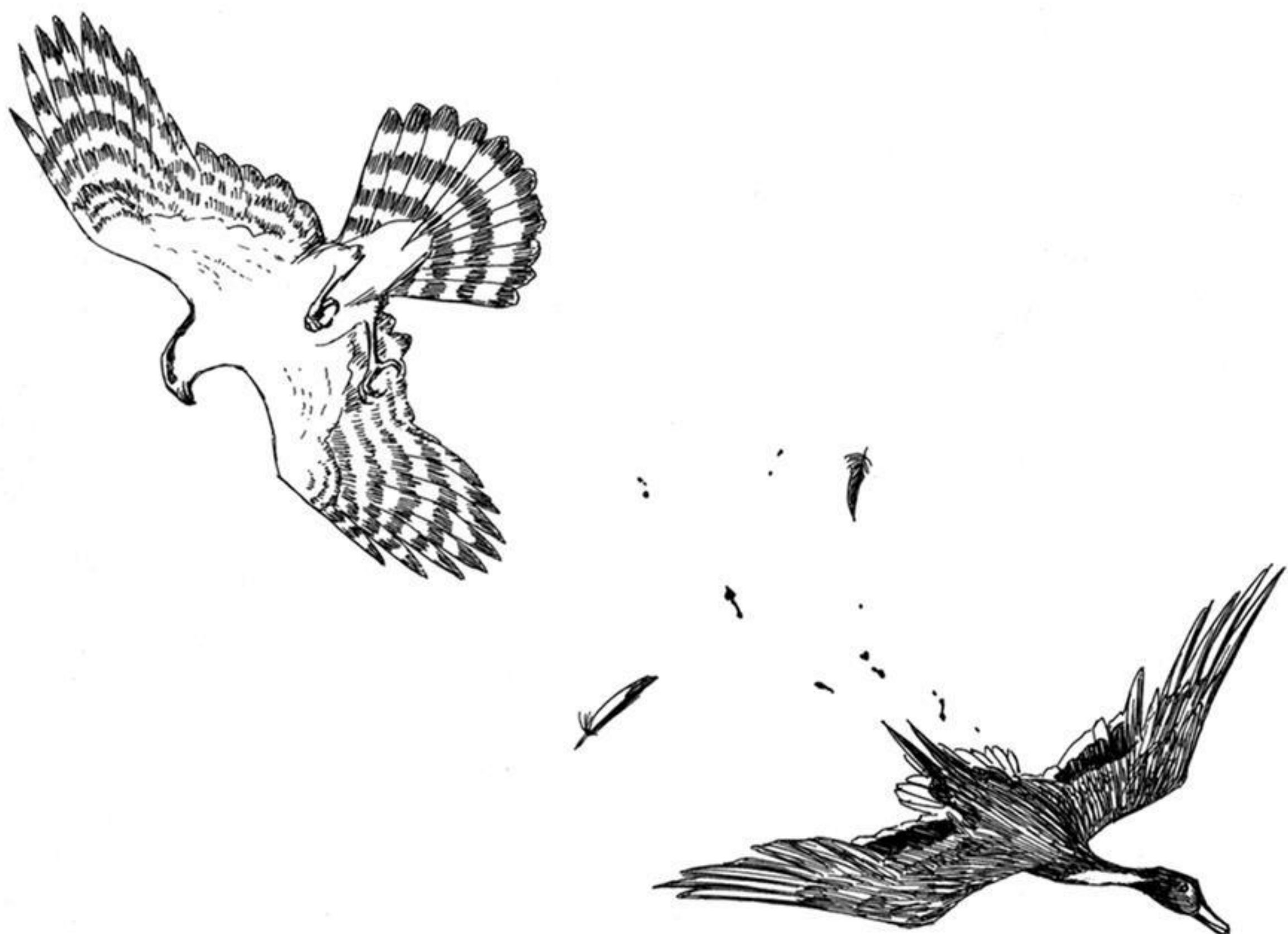






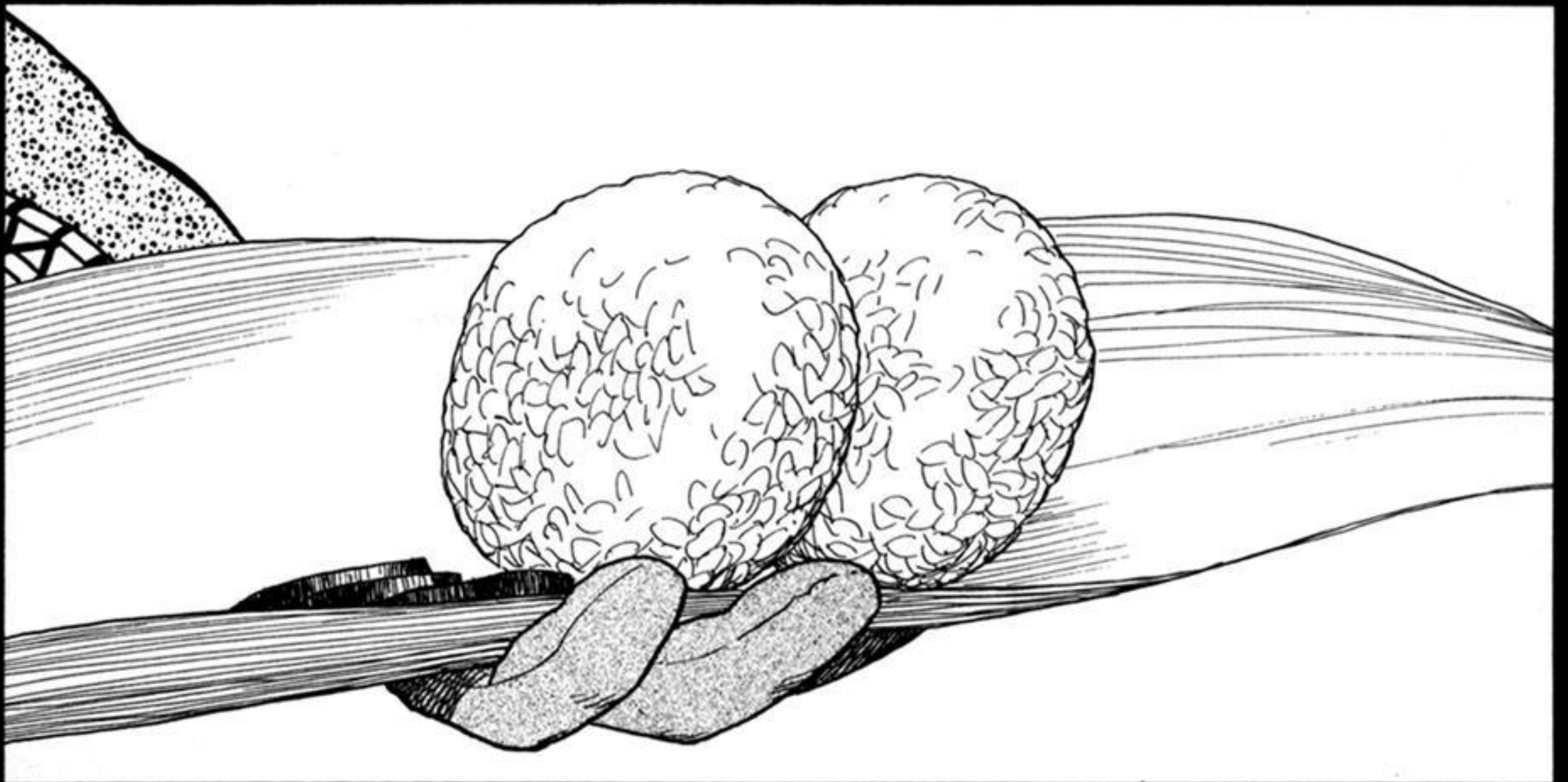








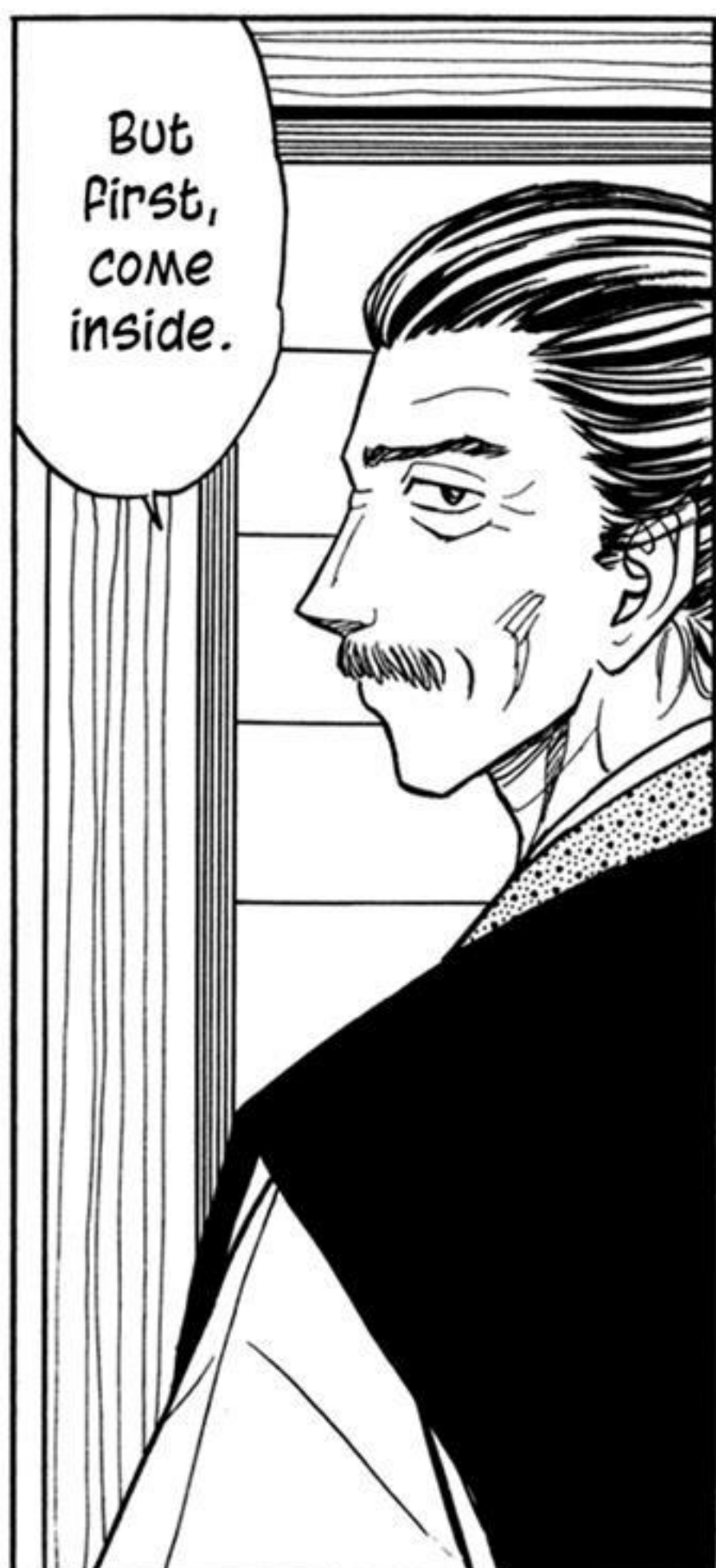




Rice...

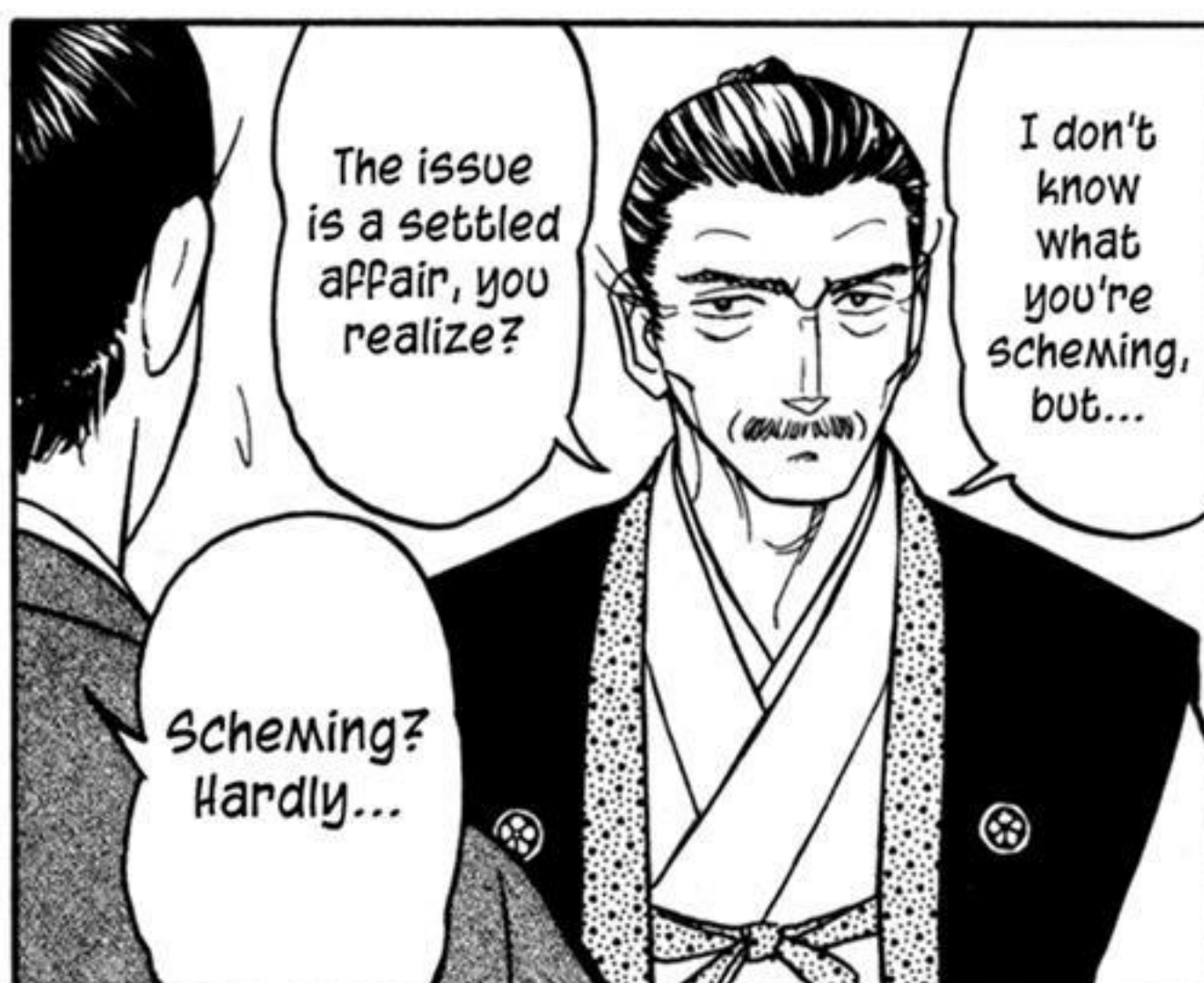
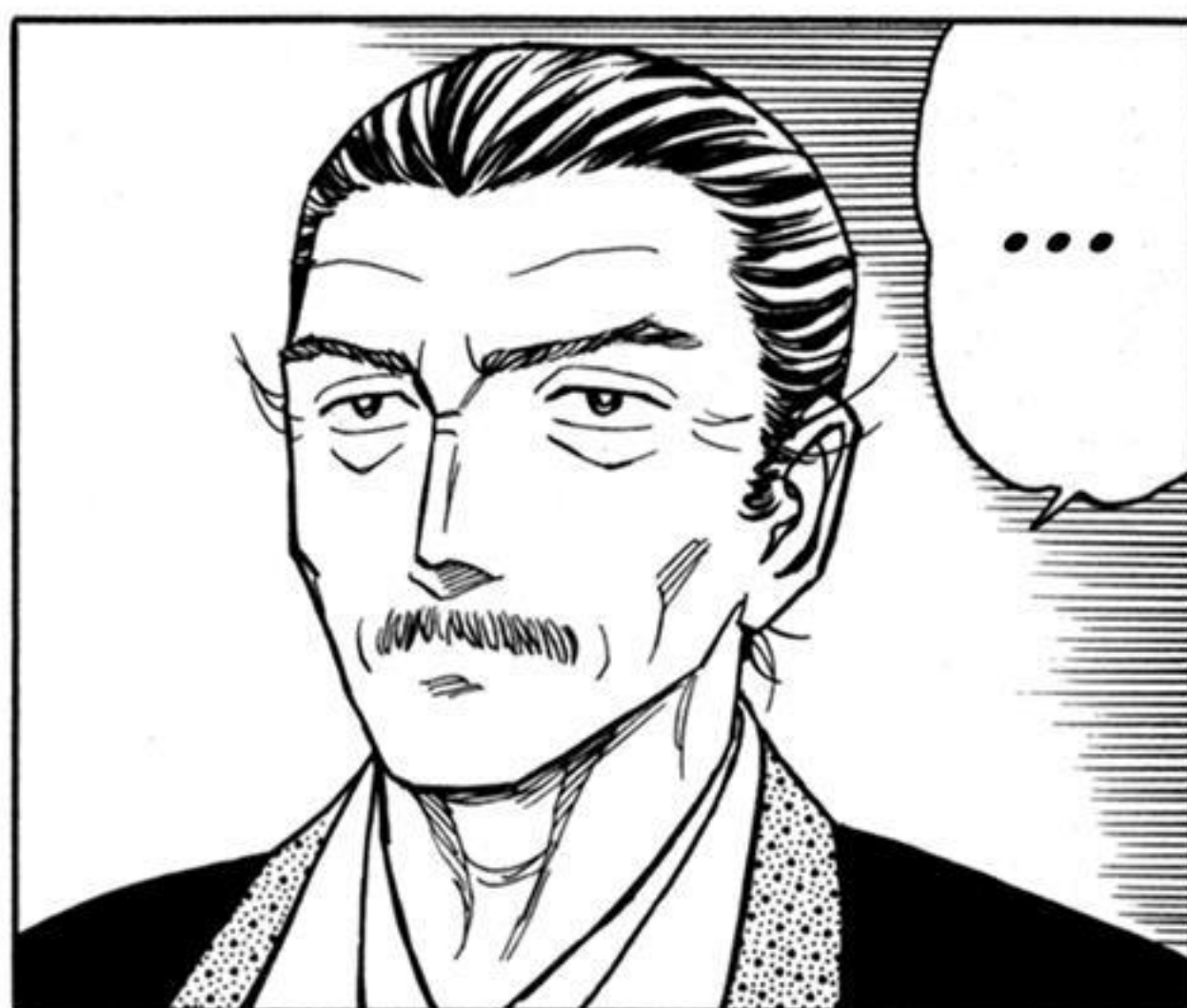


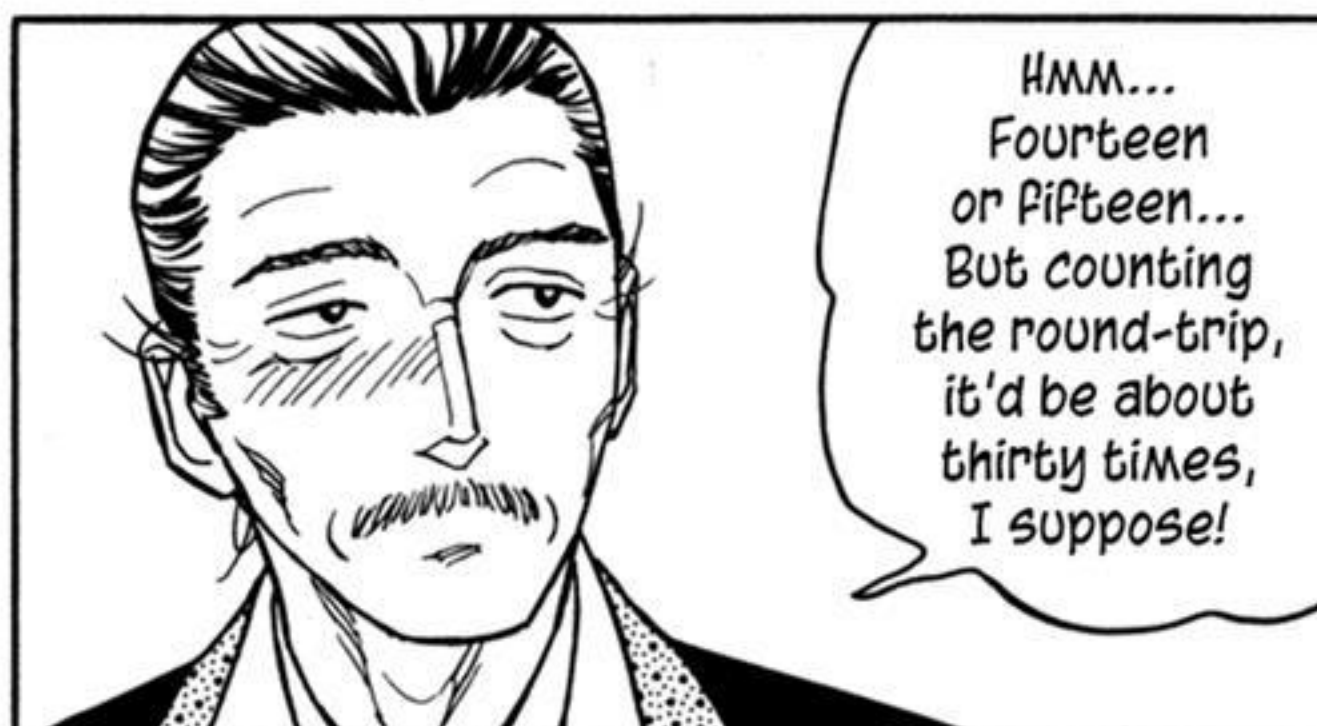




Chapter 3: Correspondence in Winter









You inquired if our Hitachi domain would be fine if we were to side with the Tokugawa and win...



At the meeting shortly before Sekigahara, you asked a peculiar question.

By the way, Naizen.

HMM... Did I? What was it...?



Oh, shucks...



HMM... You have quite the perceptive mind.



Ahhh, yes, yes! That's the matter I wanted to get to the bottom of!



Not only that, the neighbouring clans we shared kinship with were essentially the lower branches of our own clan.

Our old domain had an annual wealth of 530,000 koku.

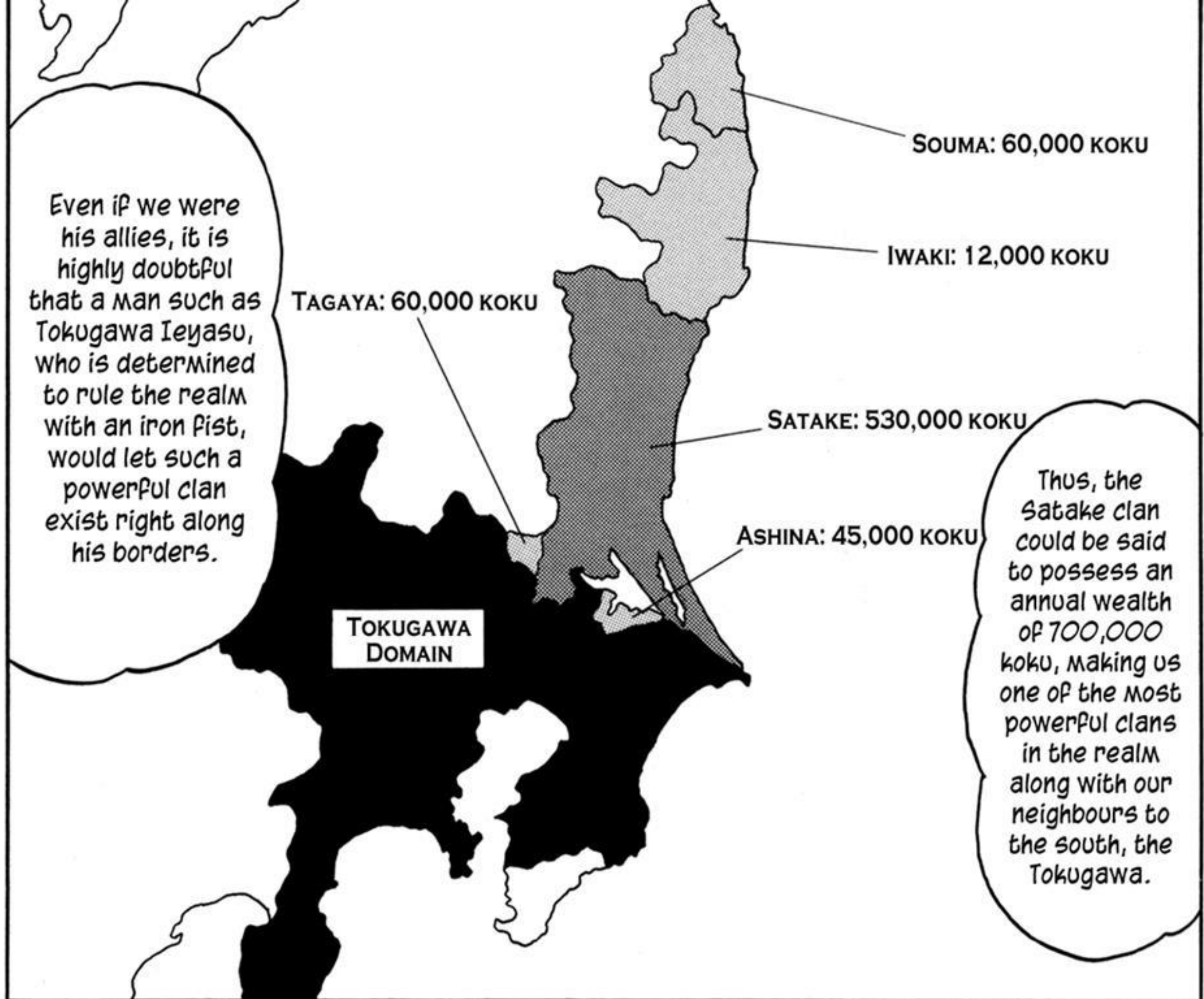


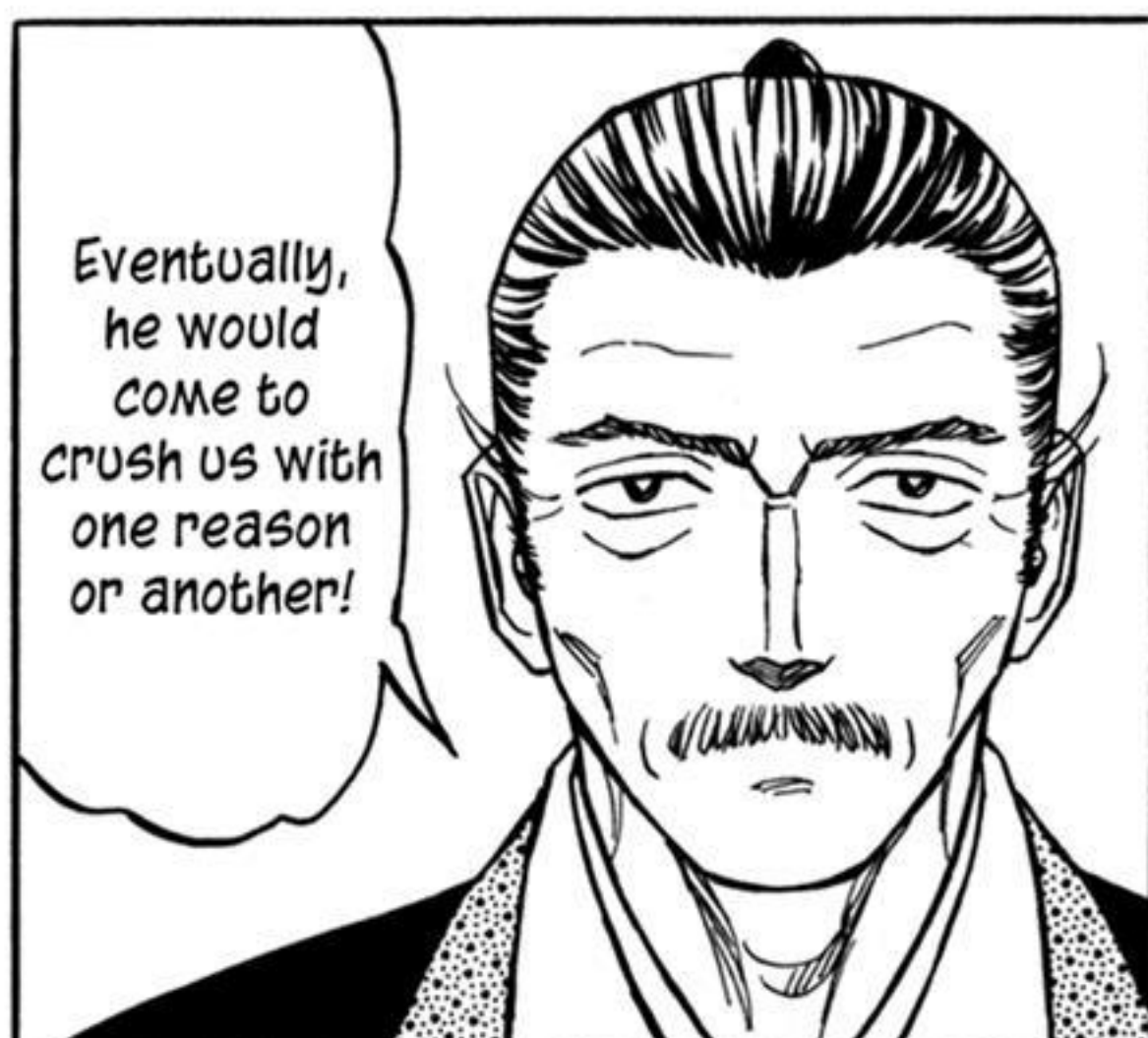
But... How do you suppose things would have turned out?



It's certainly possible that our clan may have met a more misfortunate end had we sided with the Eastern army.

Oh?







Thank
god I
decided
to visit
tonight!



Yes,
sir!



Take
care.



Uweehh!



Hahaha...
Whoo...



I heard from our lord that all daimyo must propose three locations for where they wish to build their castle,



My head...

Ughh...



We are fine with writing down one place in the letter of request.

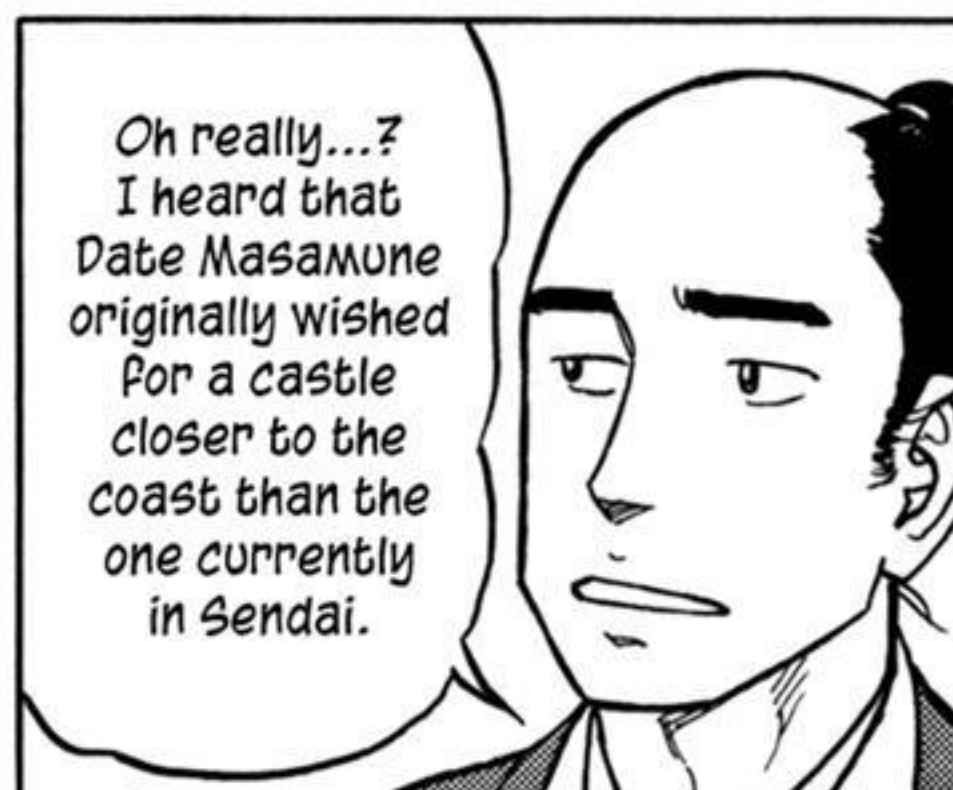
No, apparently that's not the case, brother. As long as he did not request our clan to propose multiple locations,

And that Tokugawa rarely grants any daimyo to simply have his first choice.

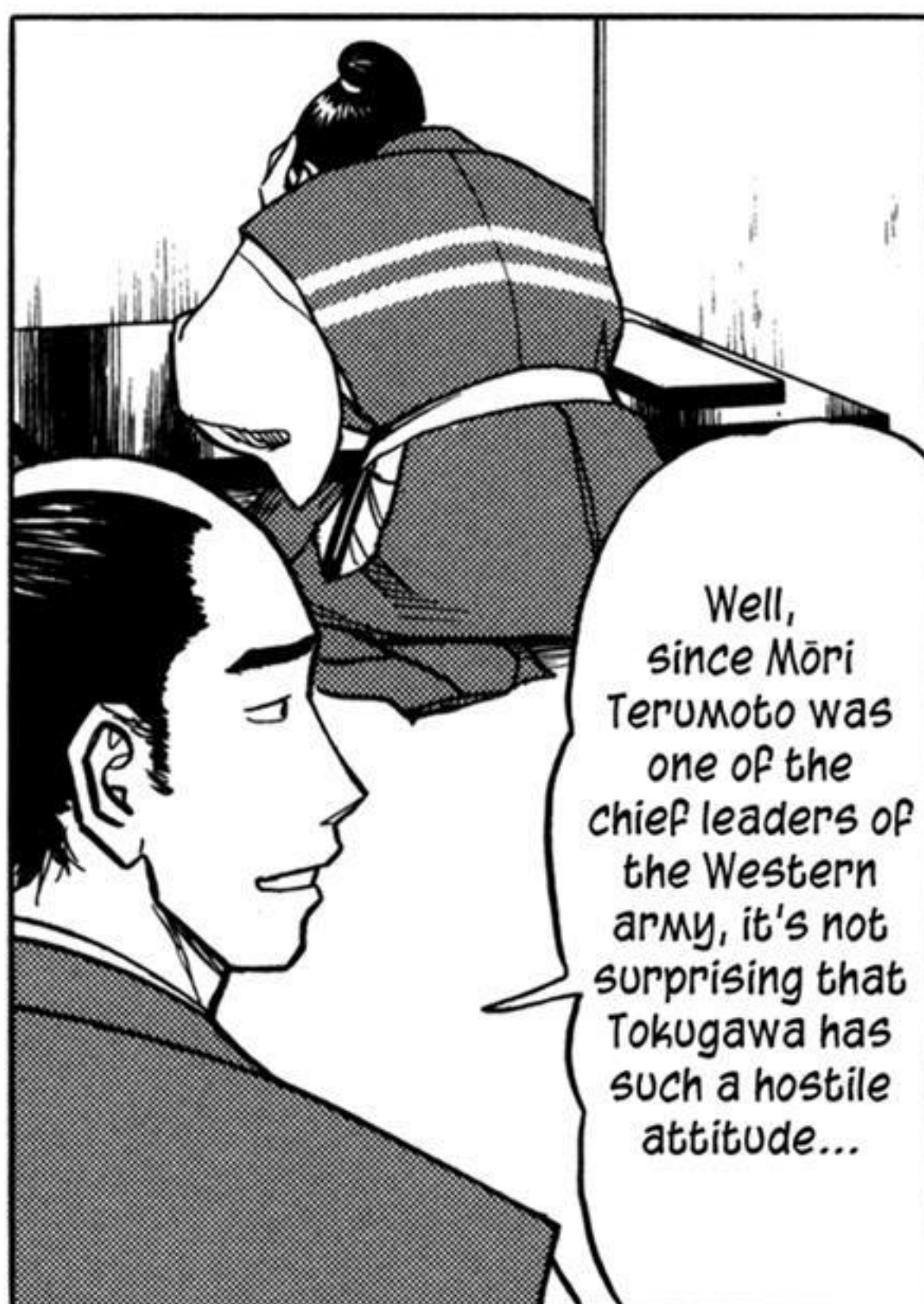


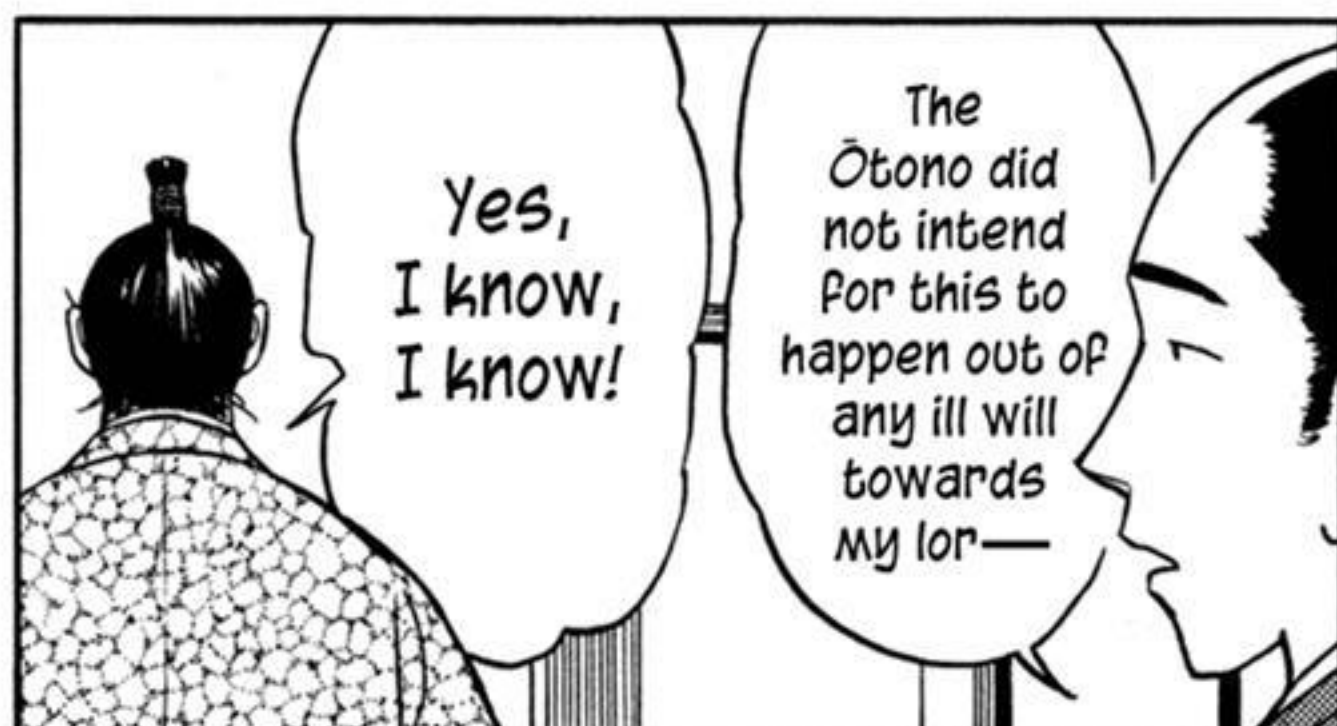
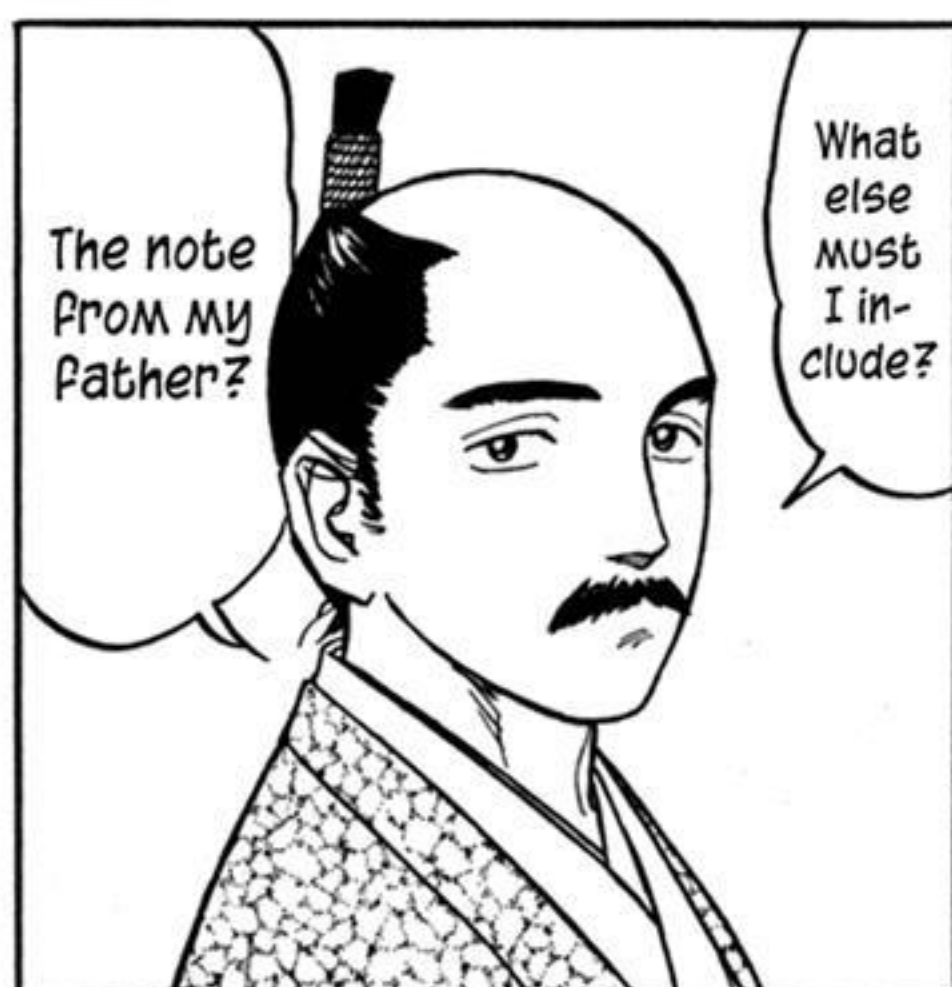
Though for the Mōri clan, it is true that Tokugawa refused to give them their preferred location.

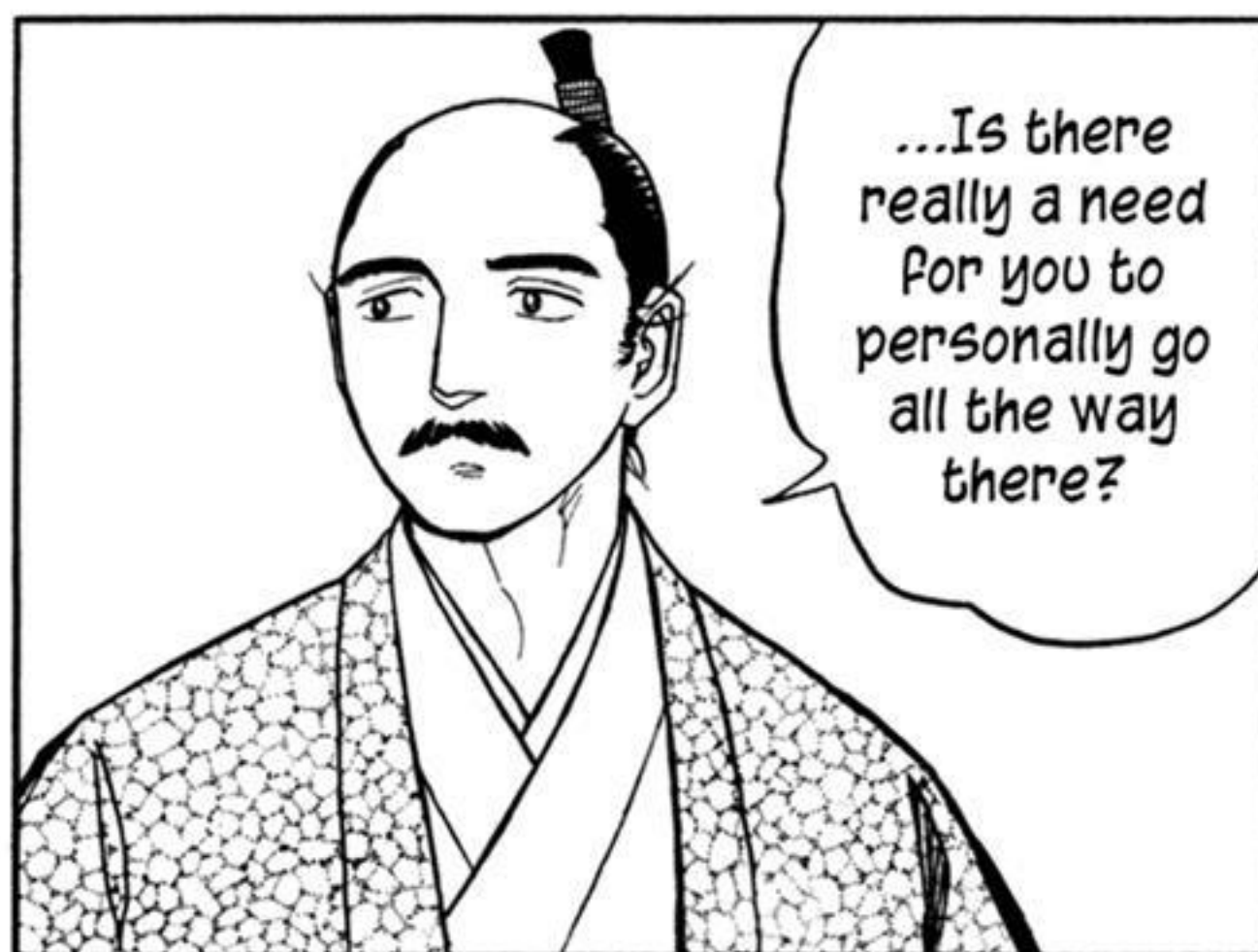
That is merely a rumour,

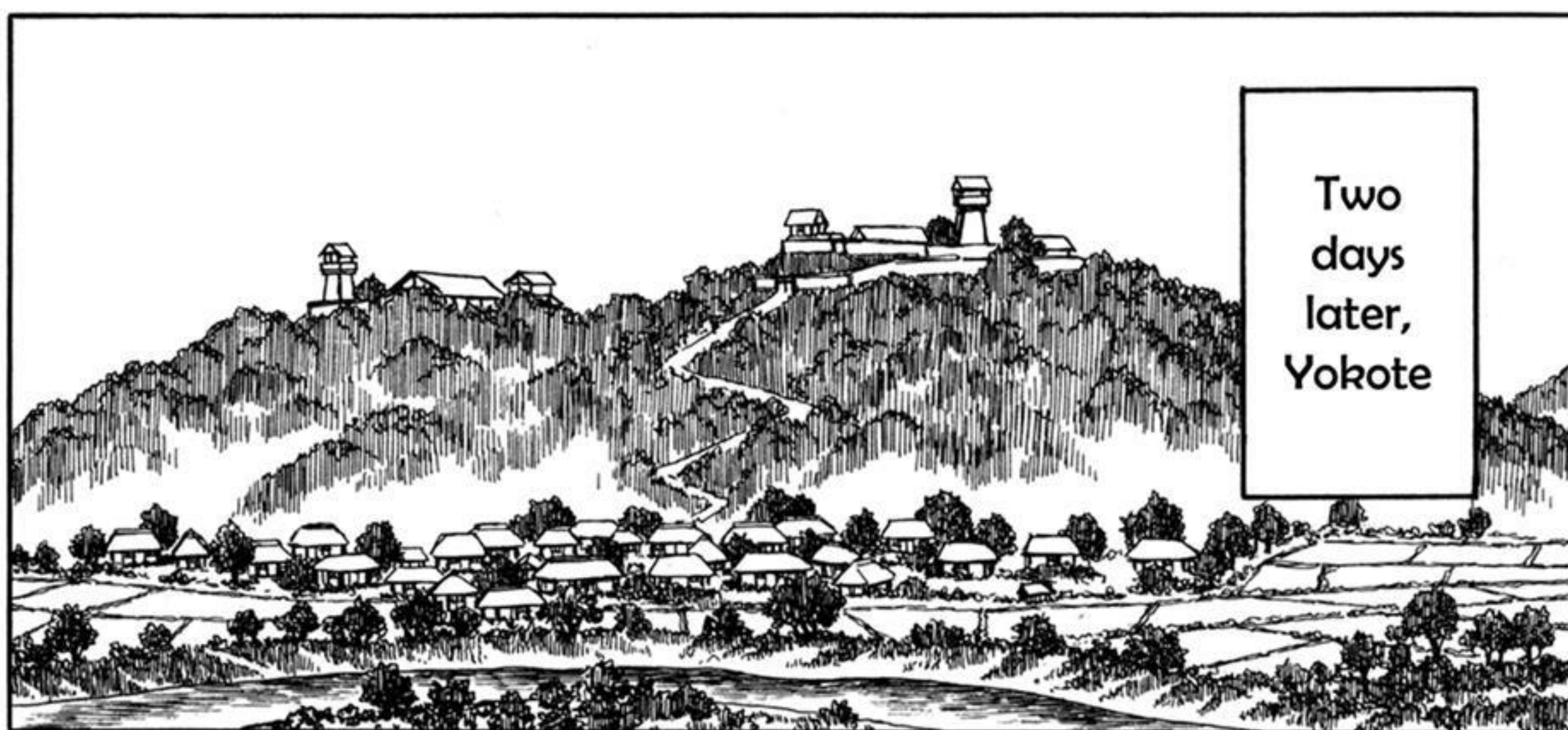
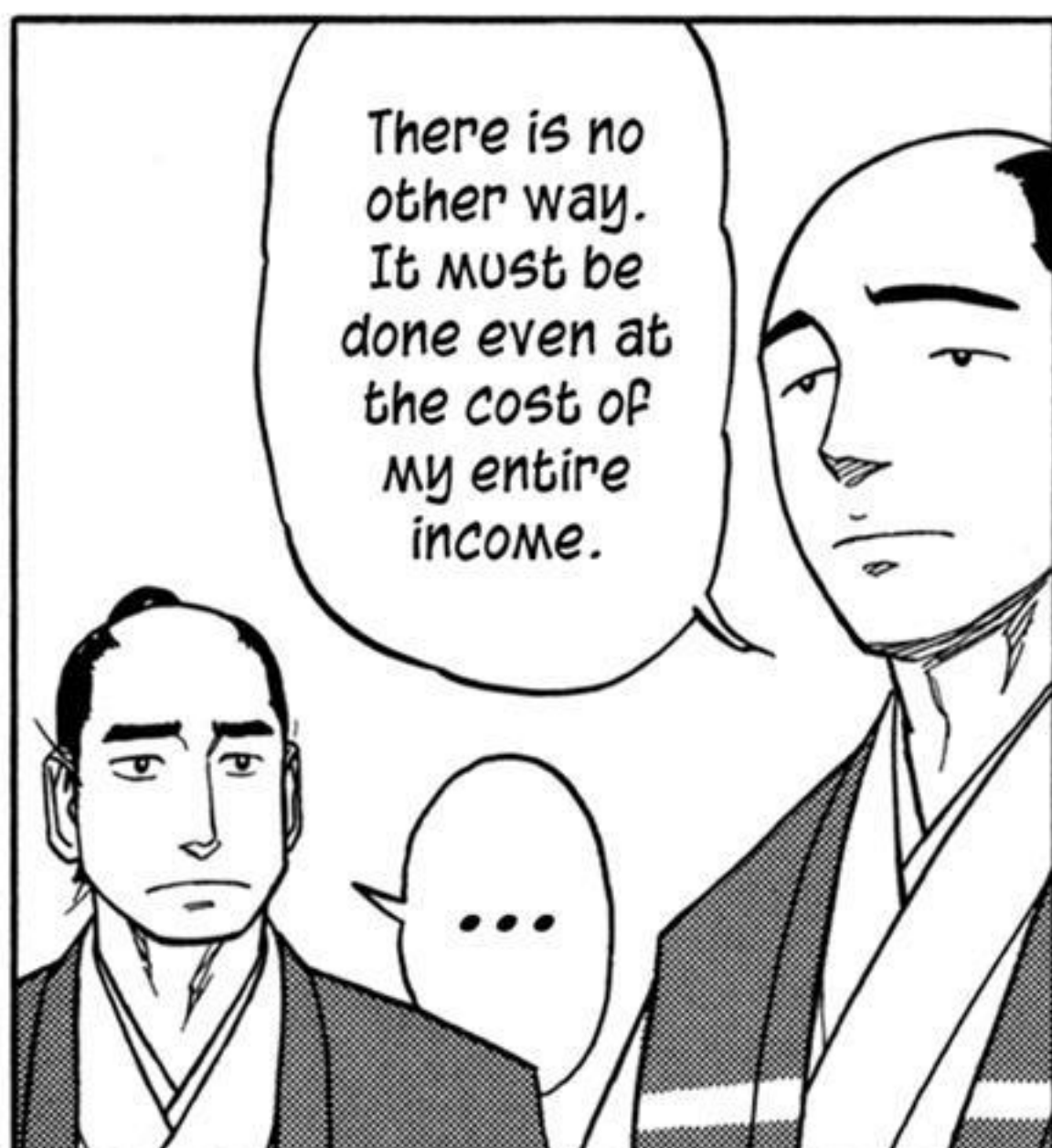


Oh really...? I heard that Date Masamune originally wished for a castle closer to the coast than the one currently in Sendai.











HMM...
Yes, this
should do for
our reasons in
choosing this
location...

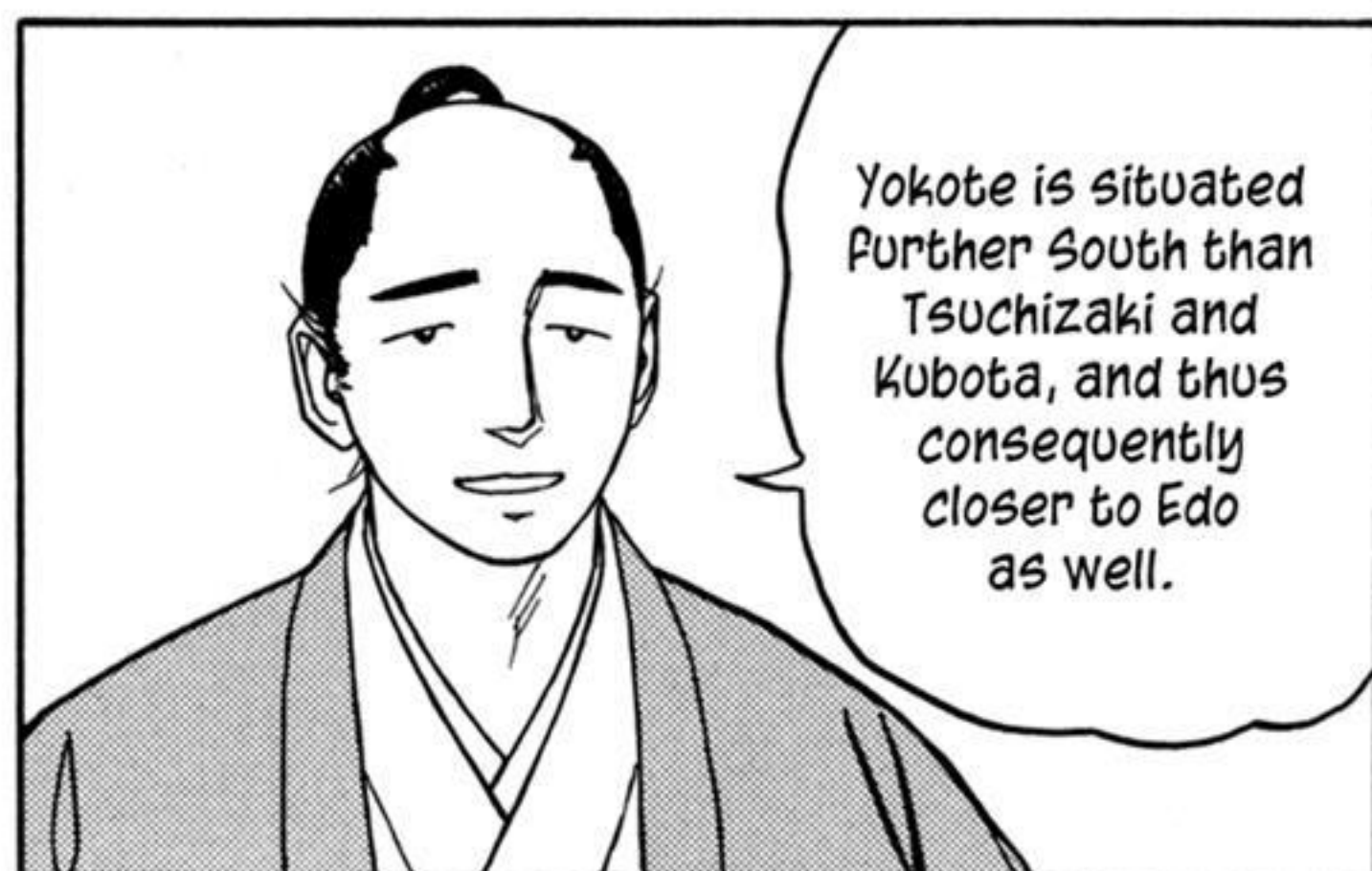


Is there
anything
else I
should
write?



Oh no,
it's none
of your
fault, of
course...

To think
things would
turn out
this way...



Yokote is situated
further south than
Tsuchizaki and
Kubota, and thus
consequently
closer to Edo
as well.

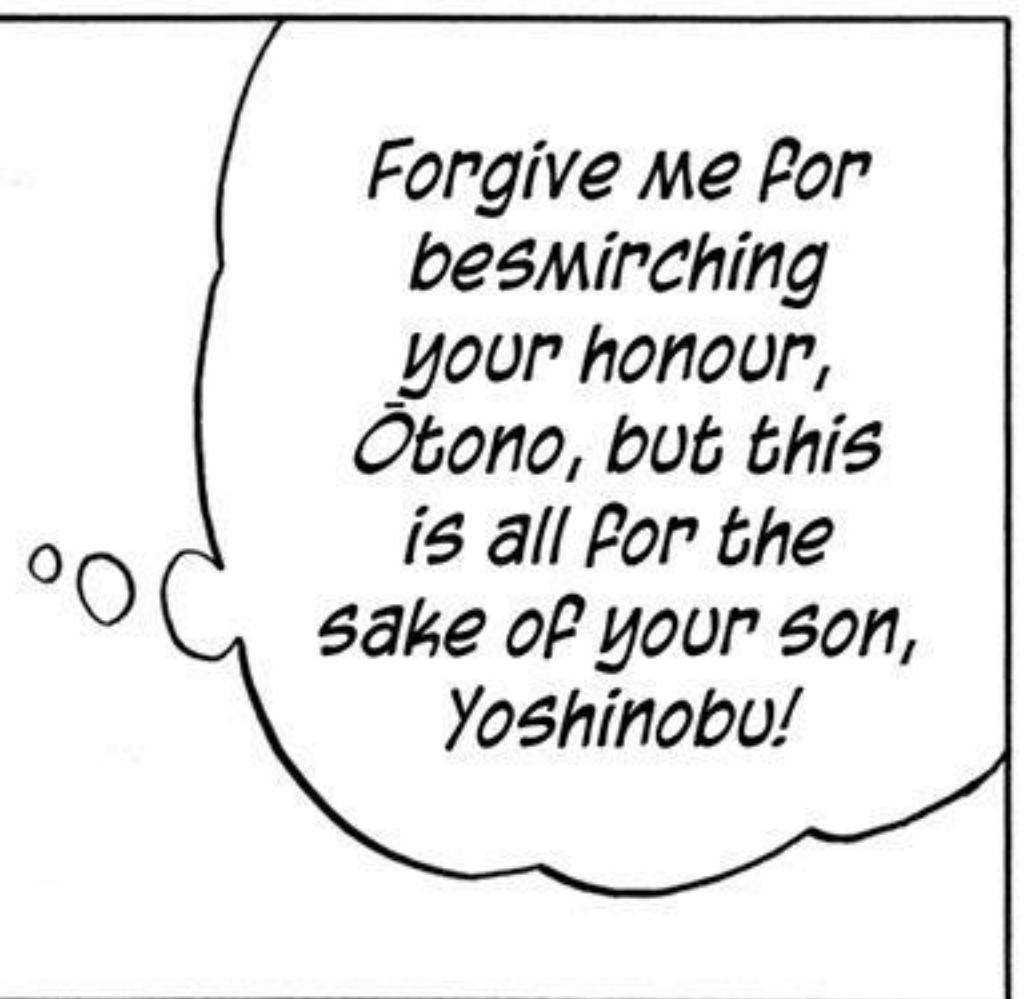
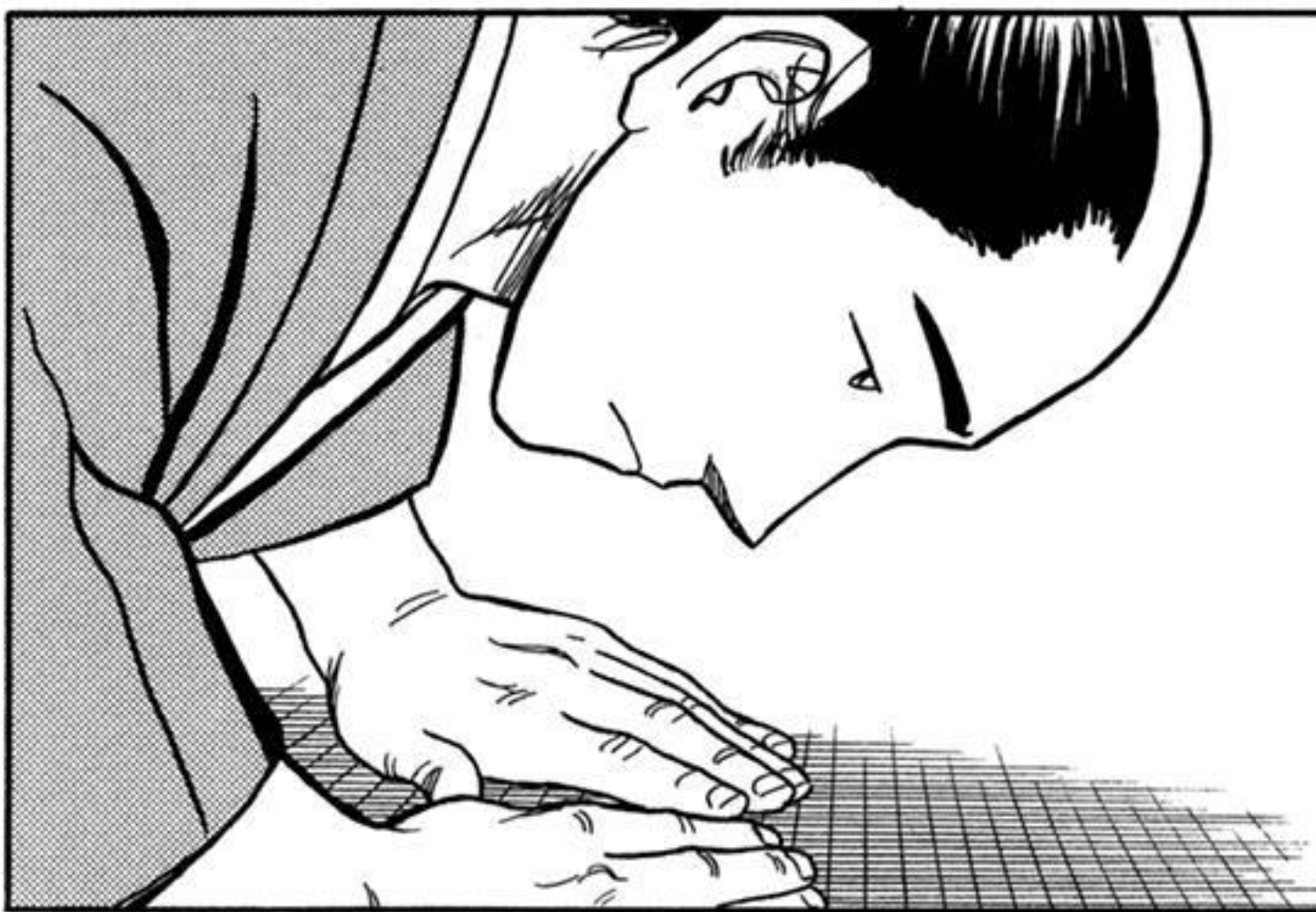
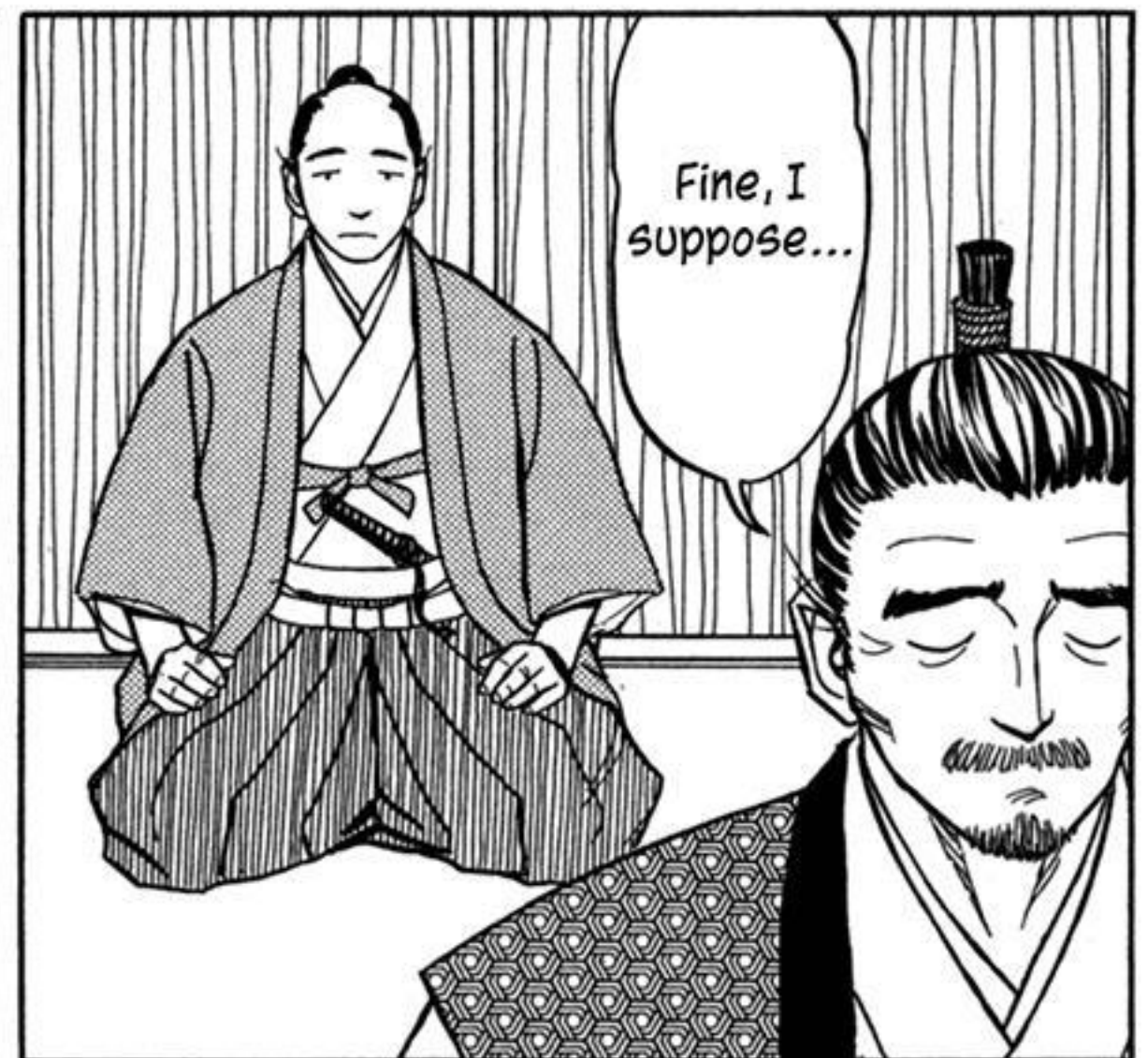


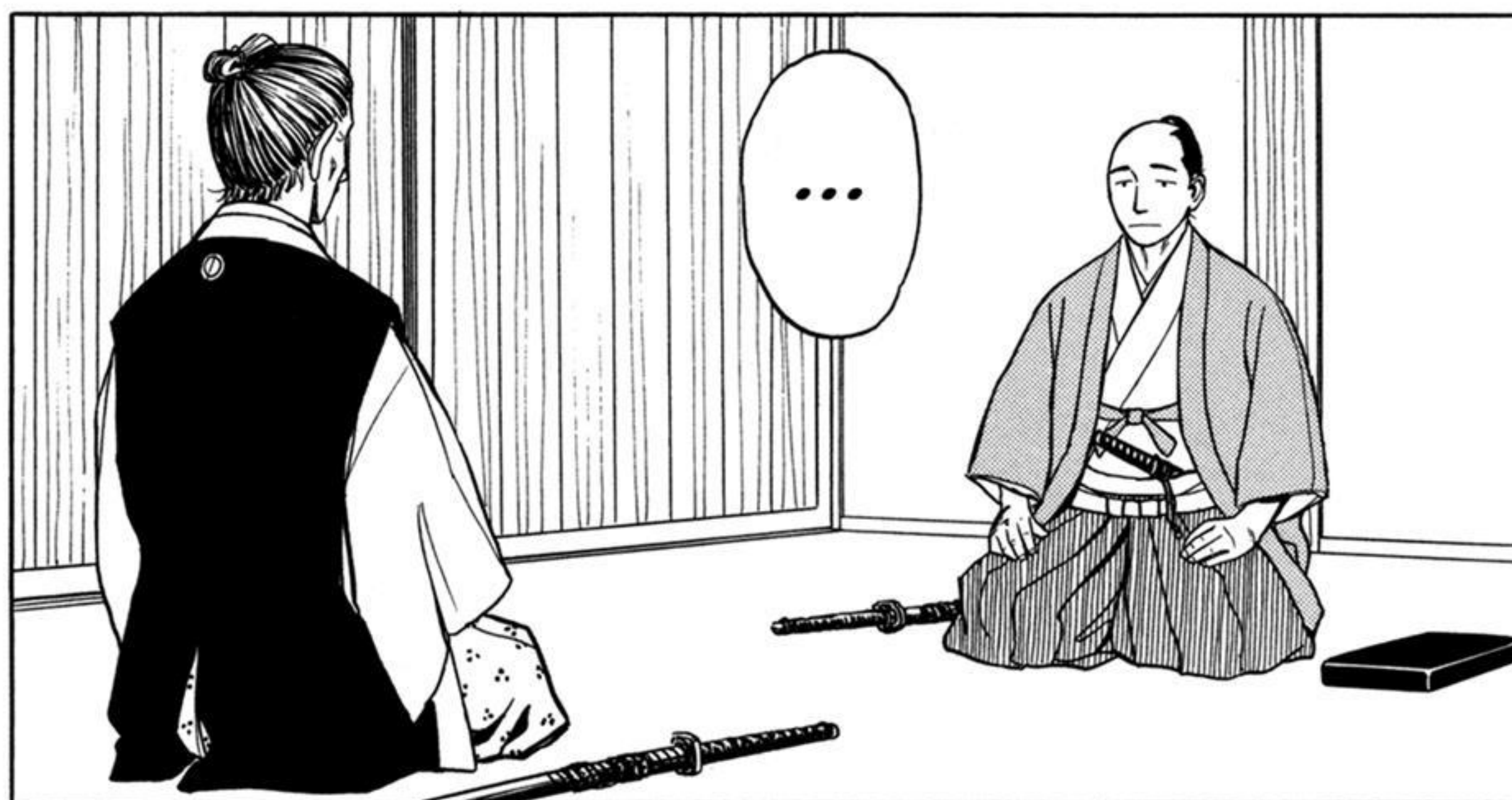
Well...



Haha.
Flattering
Tokugawa,
I see.

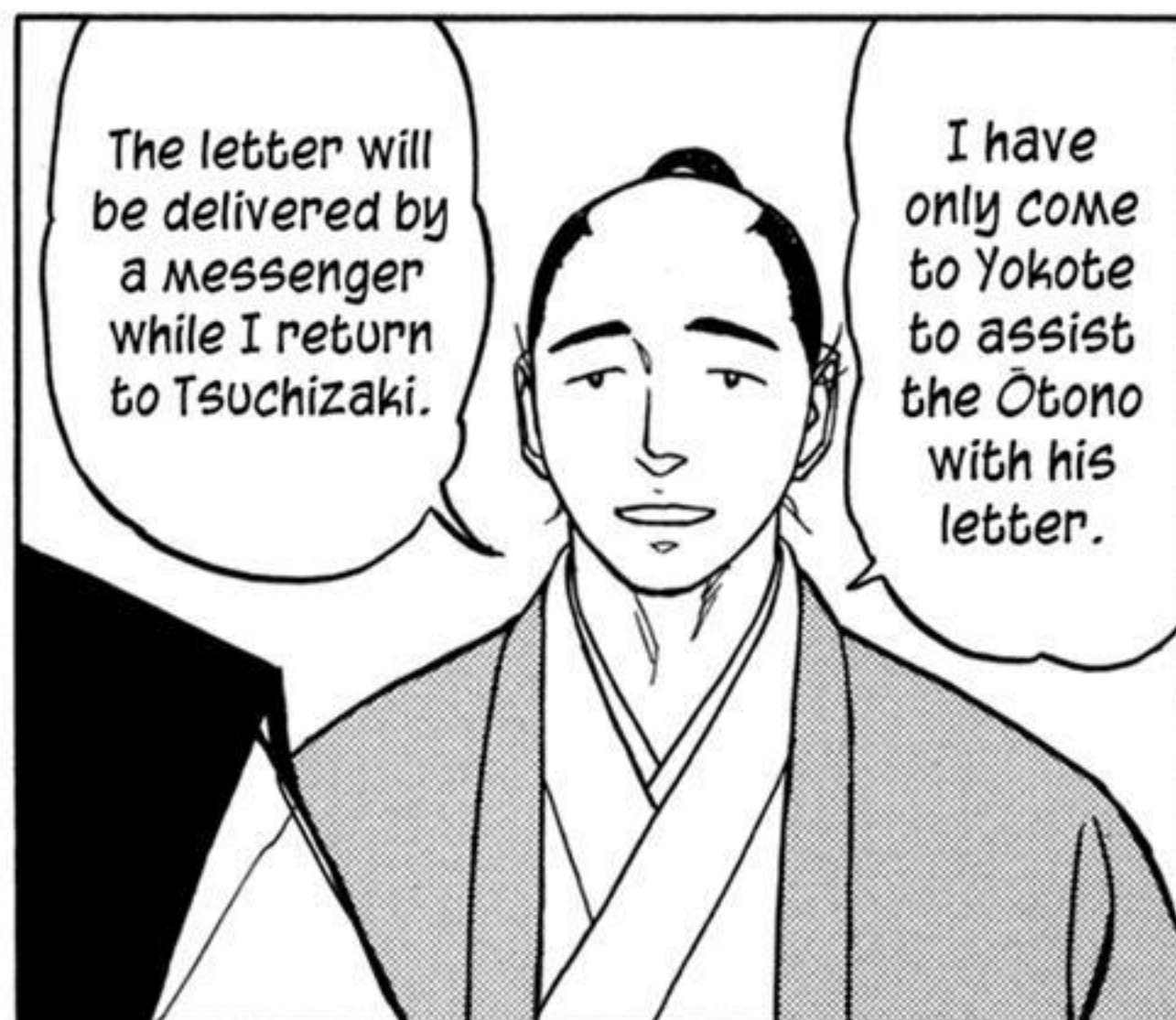
If any calamity
were to befall Edo,
then we will be able
to provide quicker
aid if we can build
our seat at Yokote...
How about some-
thing like that?







**Then
show
me that
letter
now!**



The letter will
be delivered by
a messenger
while I return
to Tsuchizaki.

I have
only come
to Yokote
to assist
the Ōtono
with his
letter.



**I know
it is
unrea-
sonable!**

A retainer
cannot go
peeping at
private letters
written by our
lord! It is
unreasonable!



**I'm
afraid
that's
out of the
question...**

What!?



After all,
you've
already
seen it
as well,
have you
not?



...

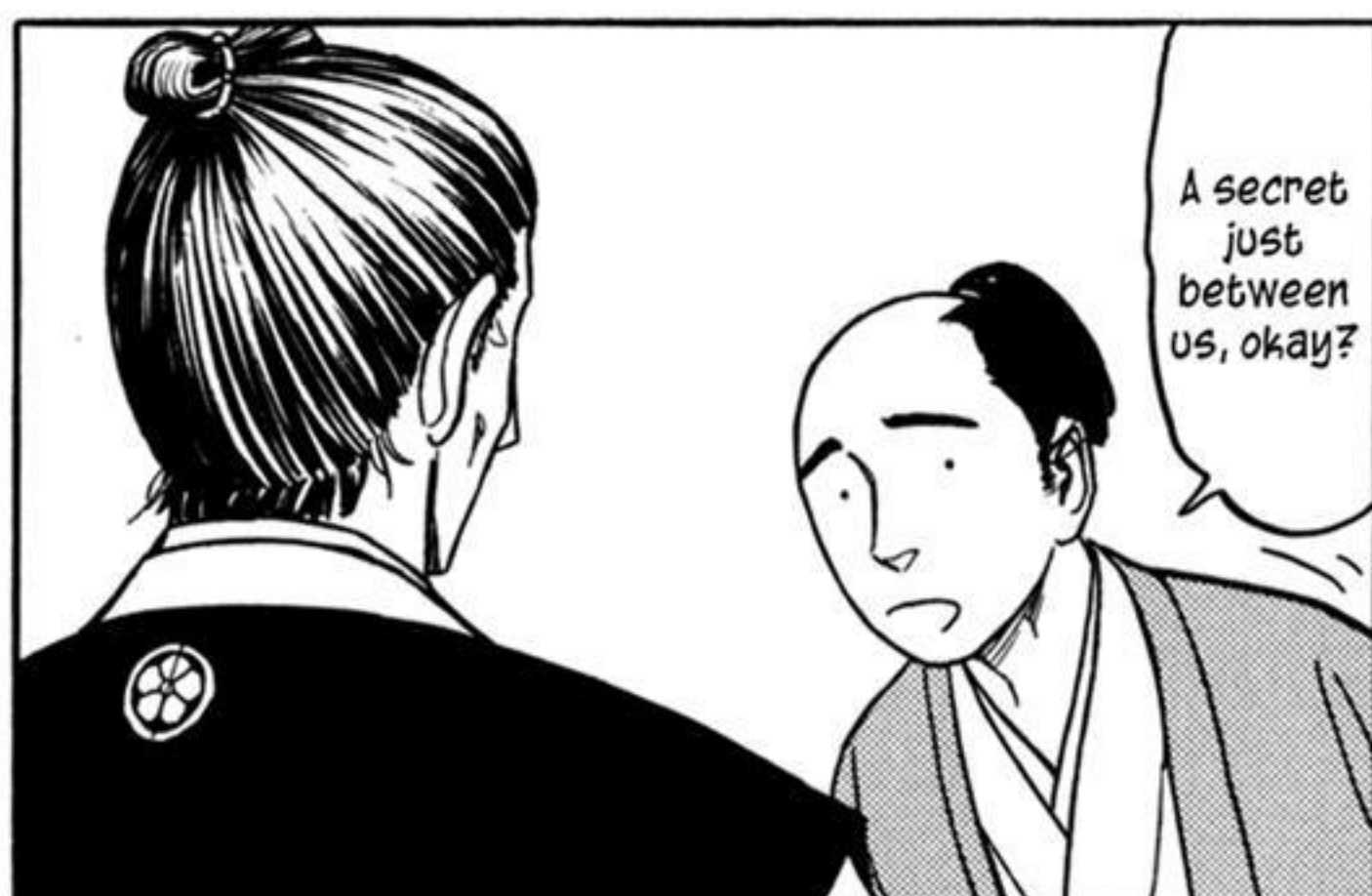


Don't
think so
deeply.



Oh
dear...

...





Are you satisfied?



But I do not believe an esteemed clan such as the Satake needs to willingly comply that far.

Official terms require three candidate locations to be proposed,



If I did, that would be treason, you realize?



You didn't think I'd actually do something so underhanded as to switch the letters, did you?

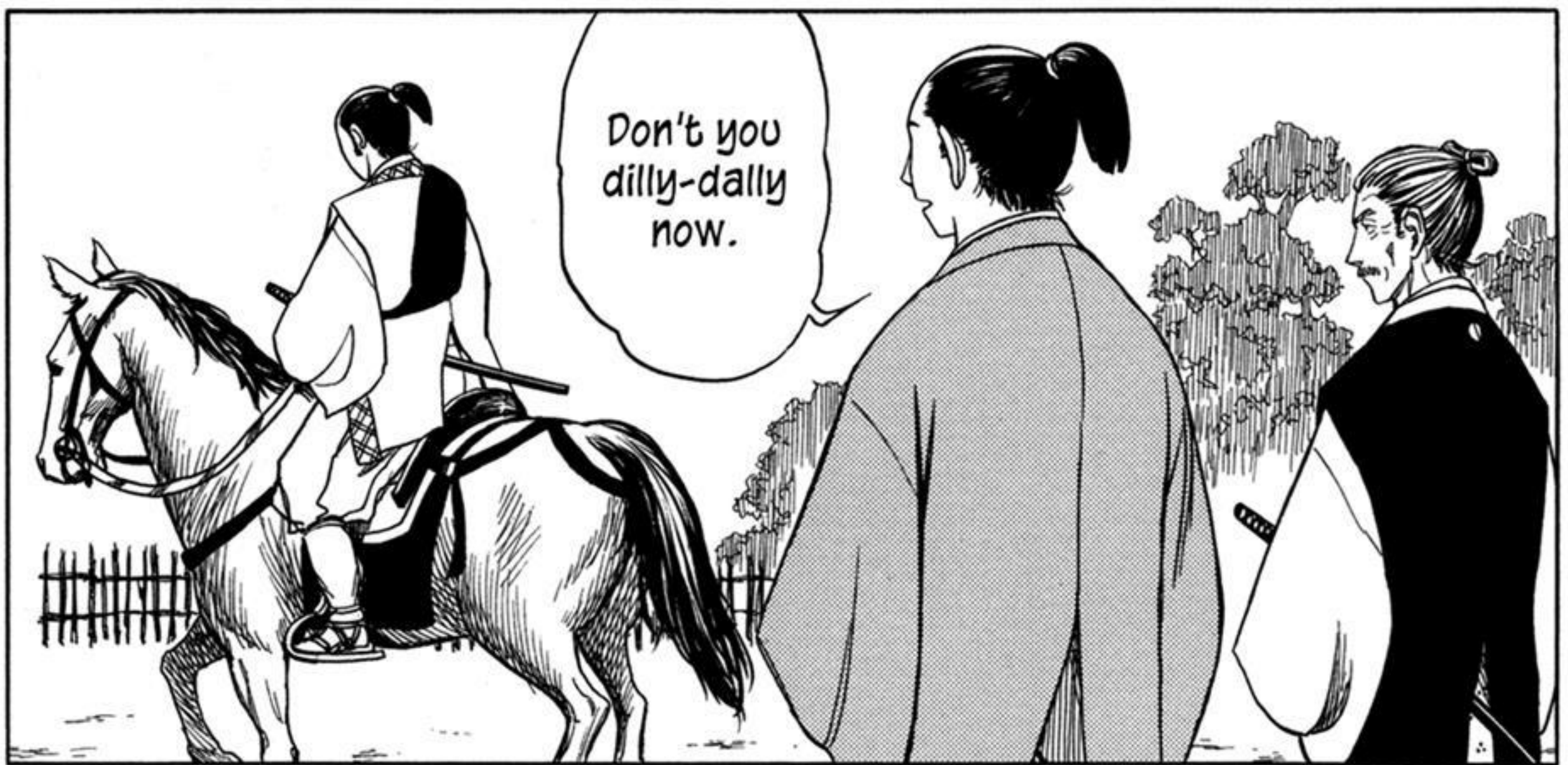


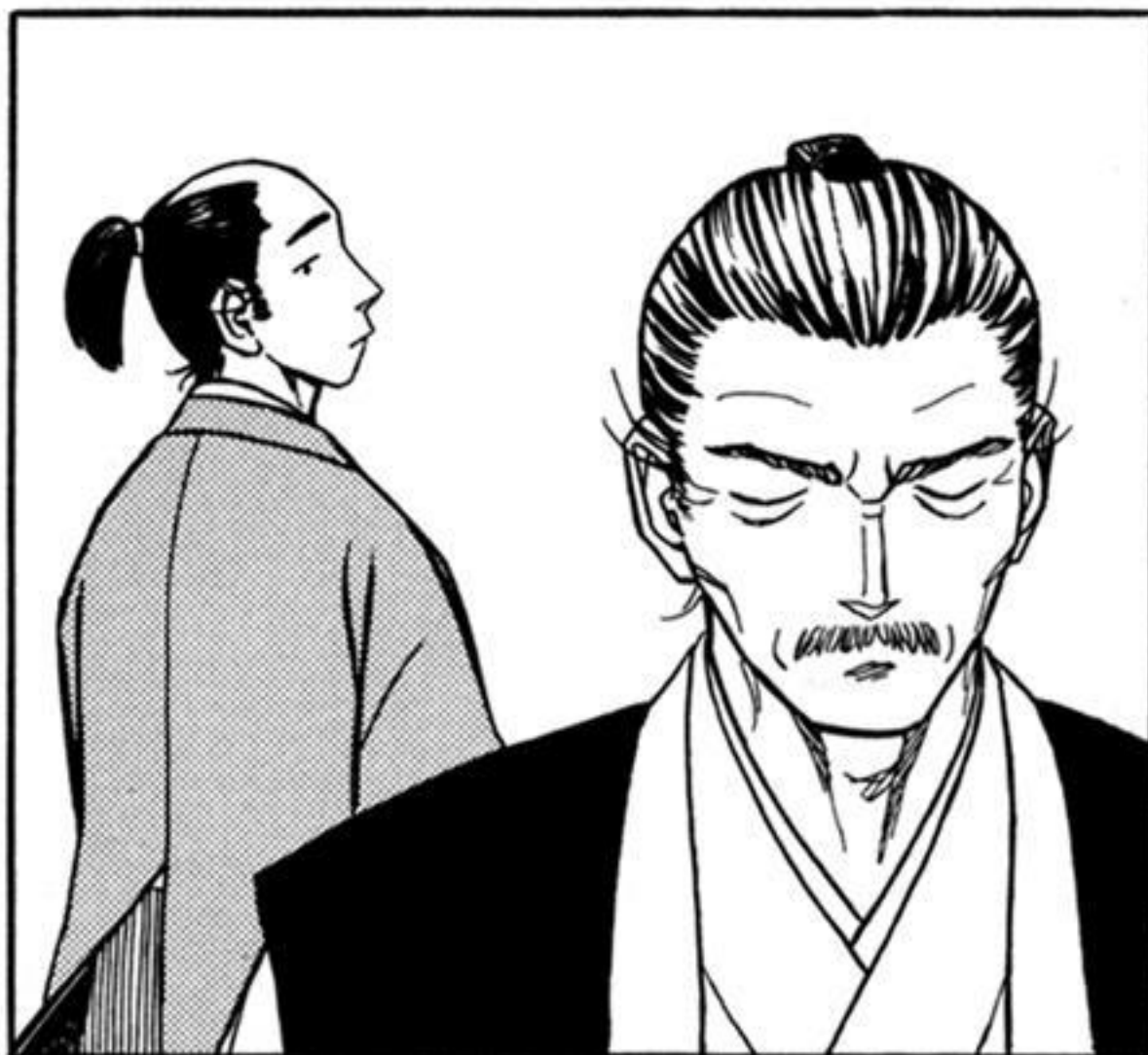
Here.



Oh, cut it out already!

On a second thought, let me hand the messenger those letters!





That
takes
care
of the
first
step!

Well,



*This is
war...!*

Kajiwara...



*Quick-
ly!*

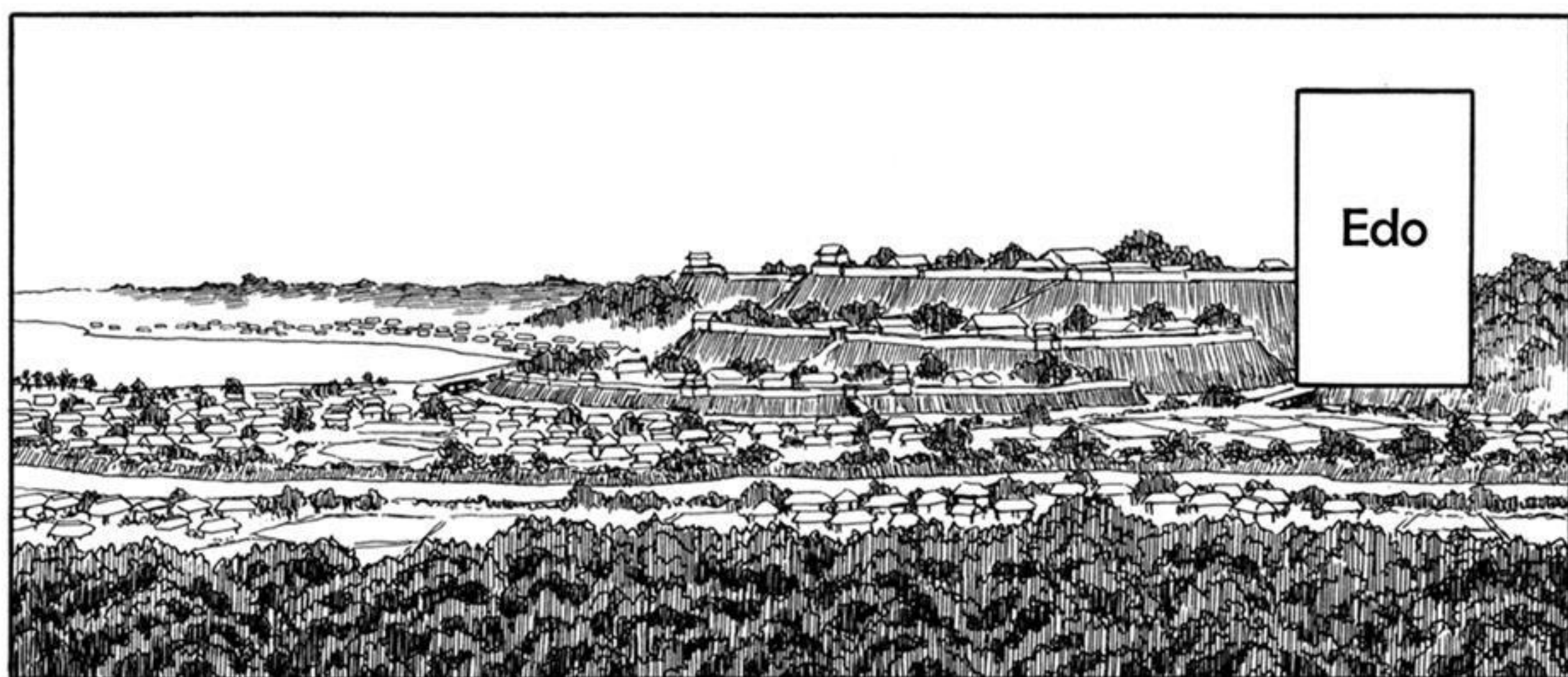
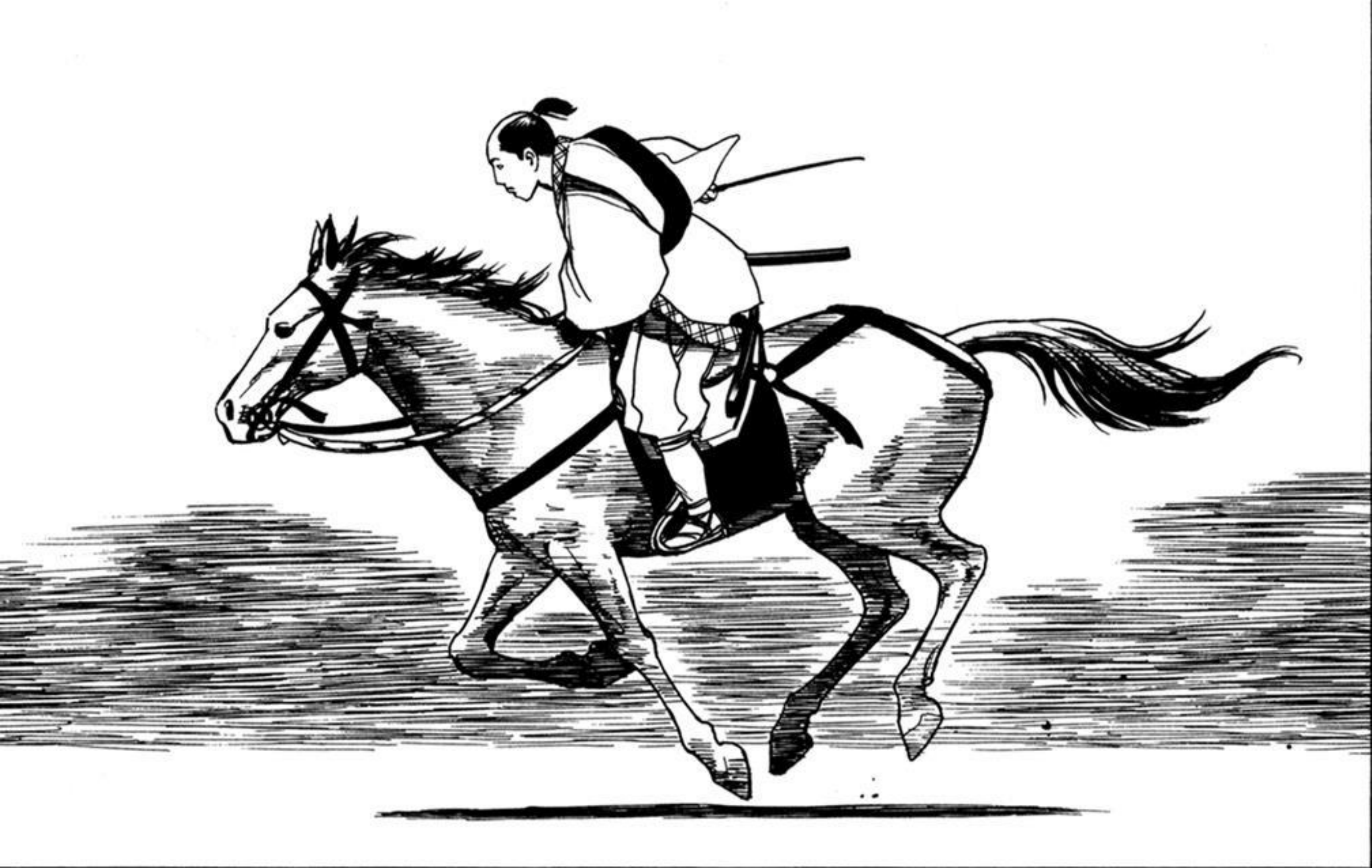


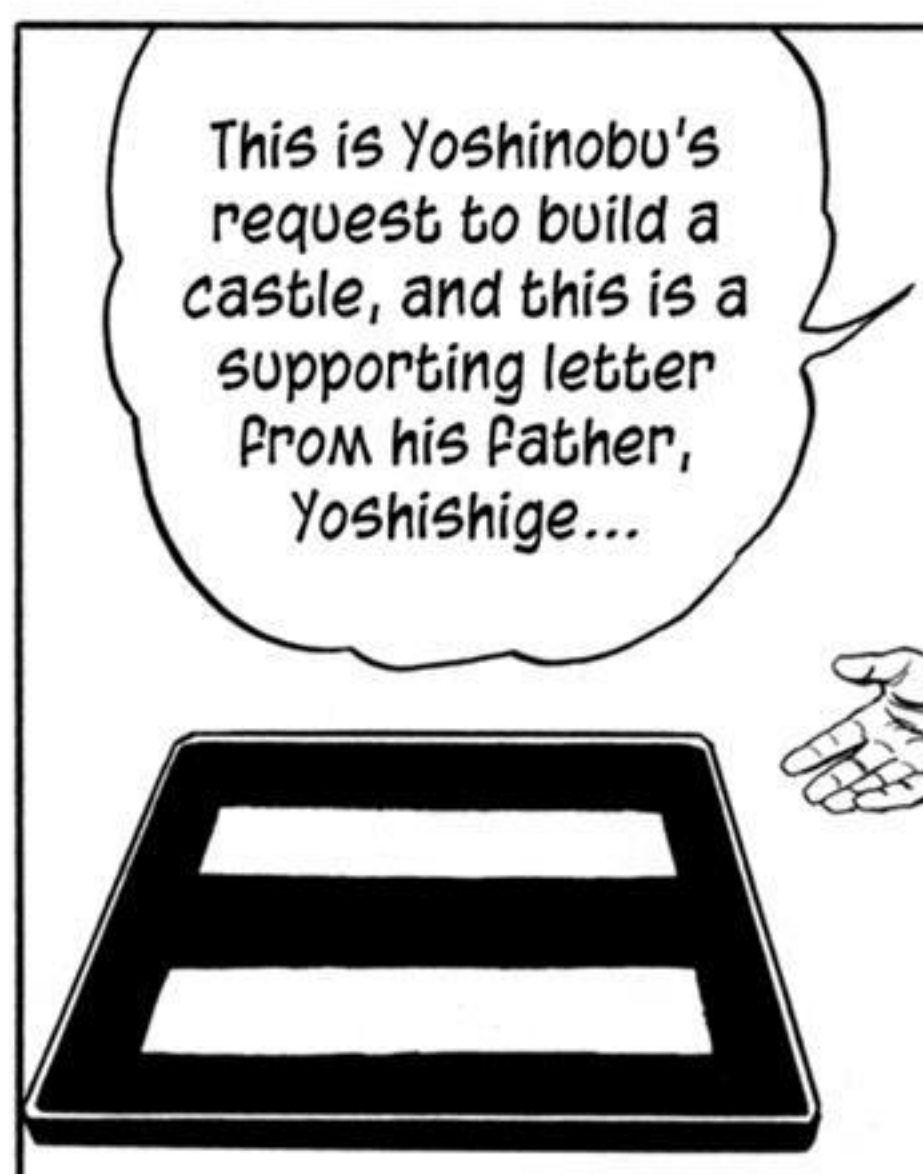
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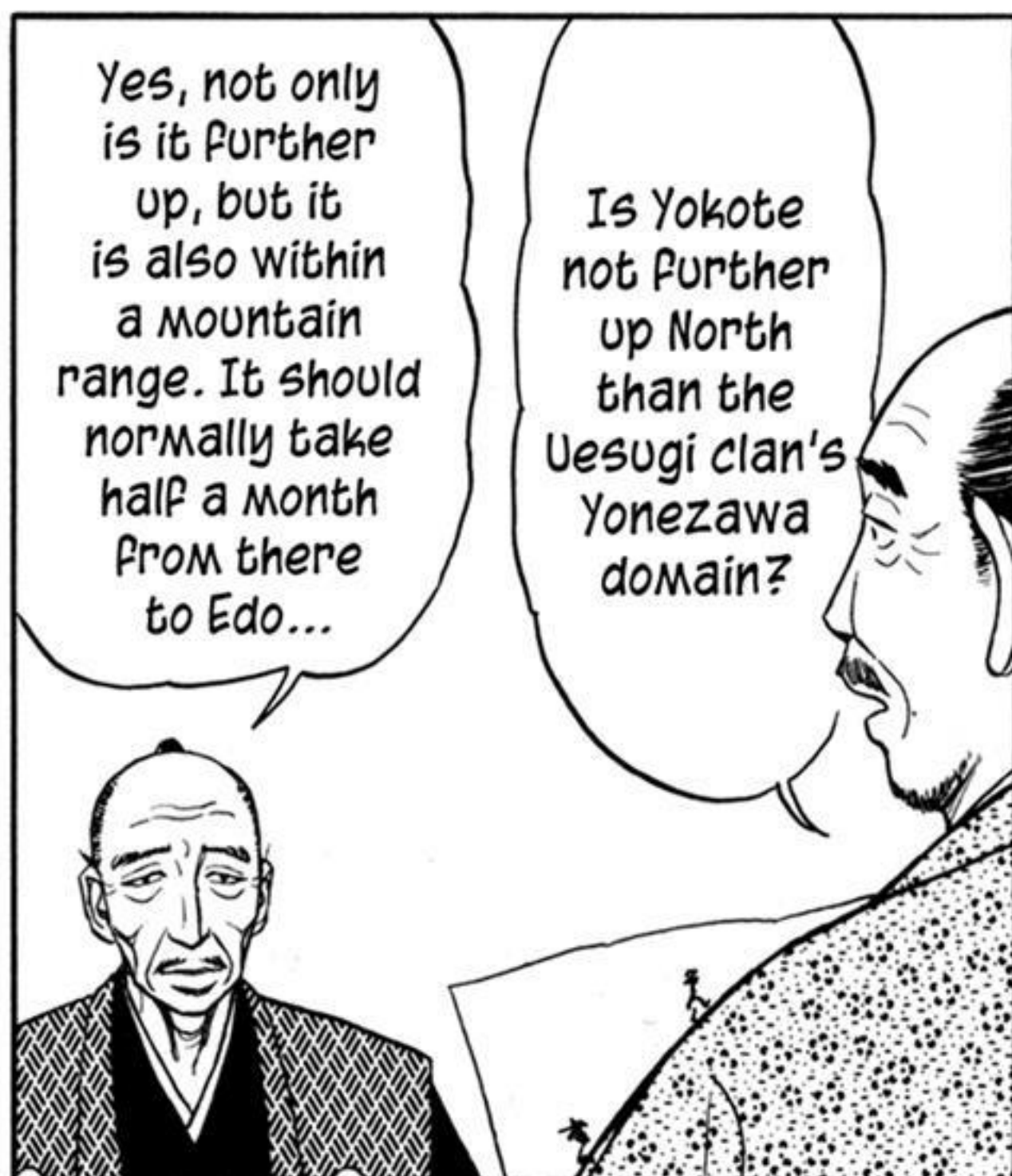
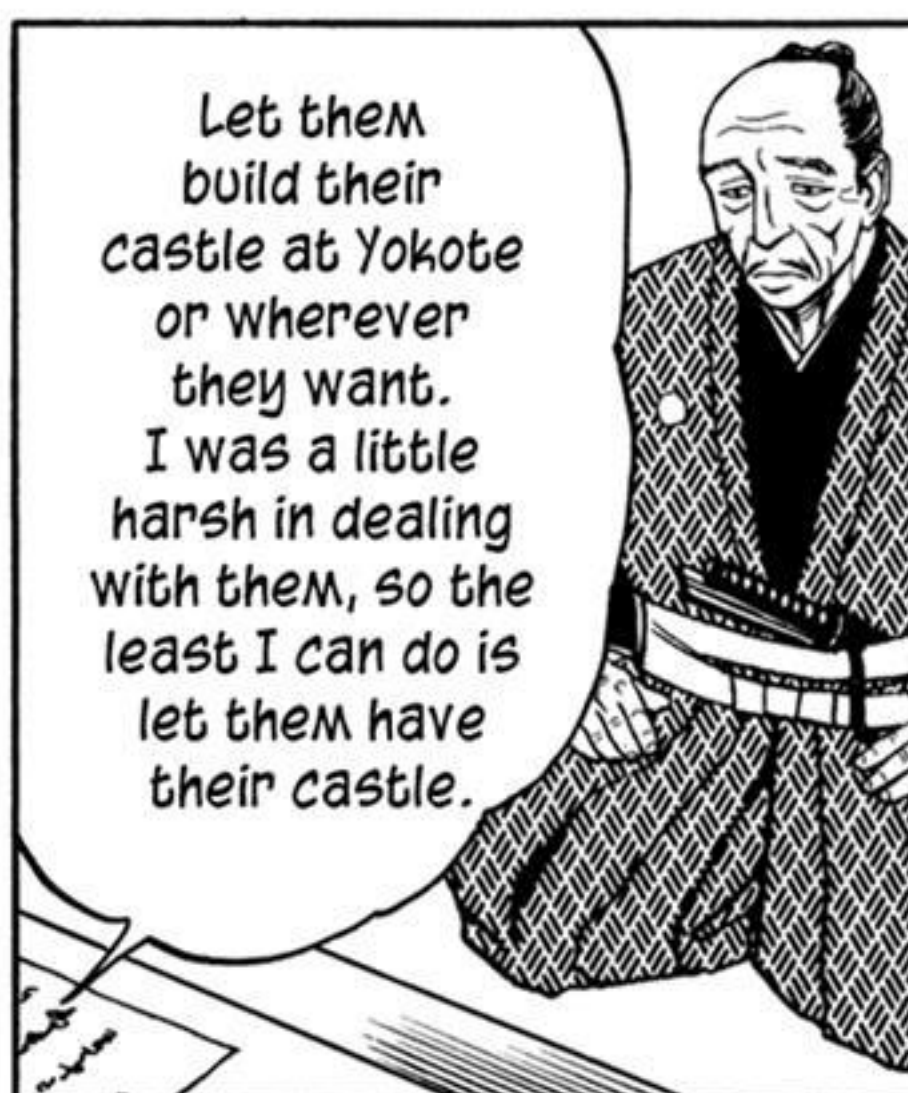


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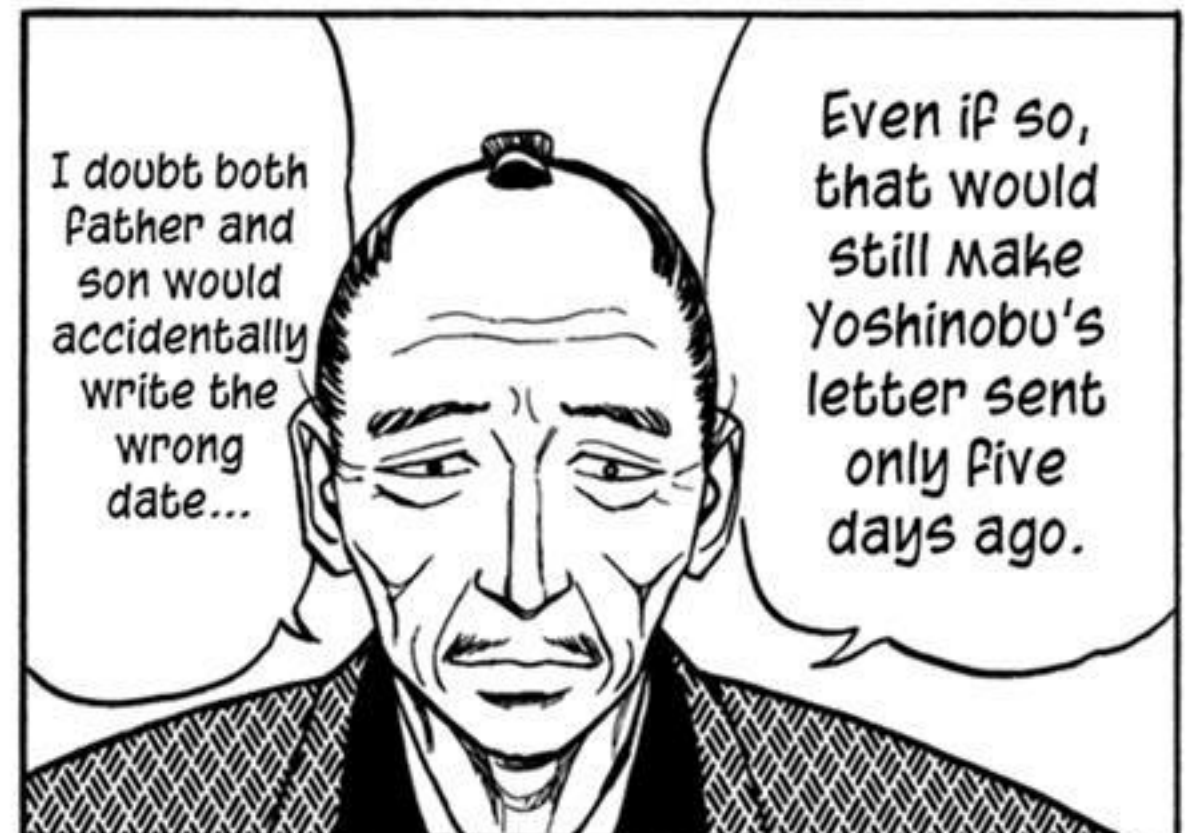


It's not strange for there to be a two day difference between Tsuchizaki and Yokote... But a mere three days from Yokote to Edo?

Is it even possible?

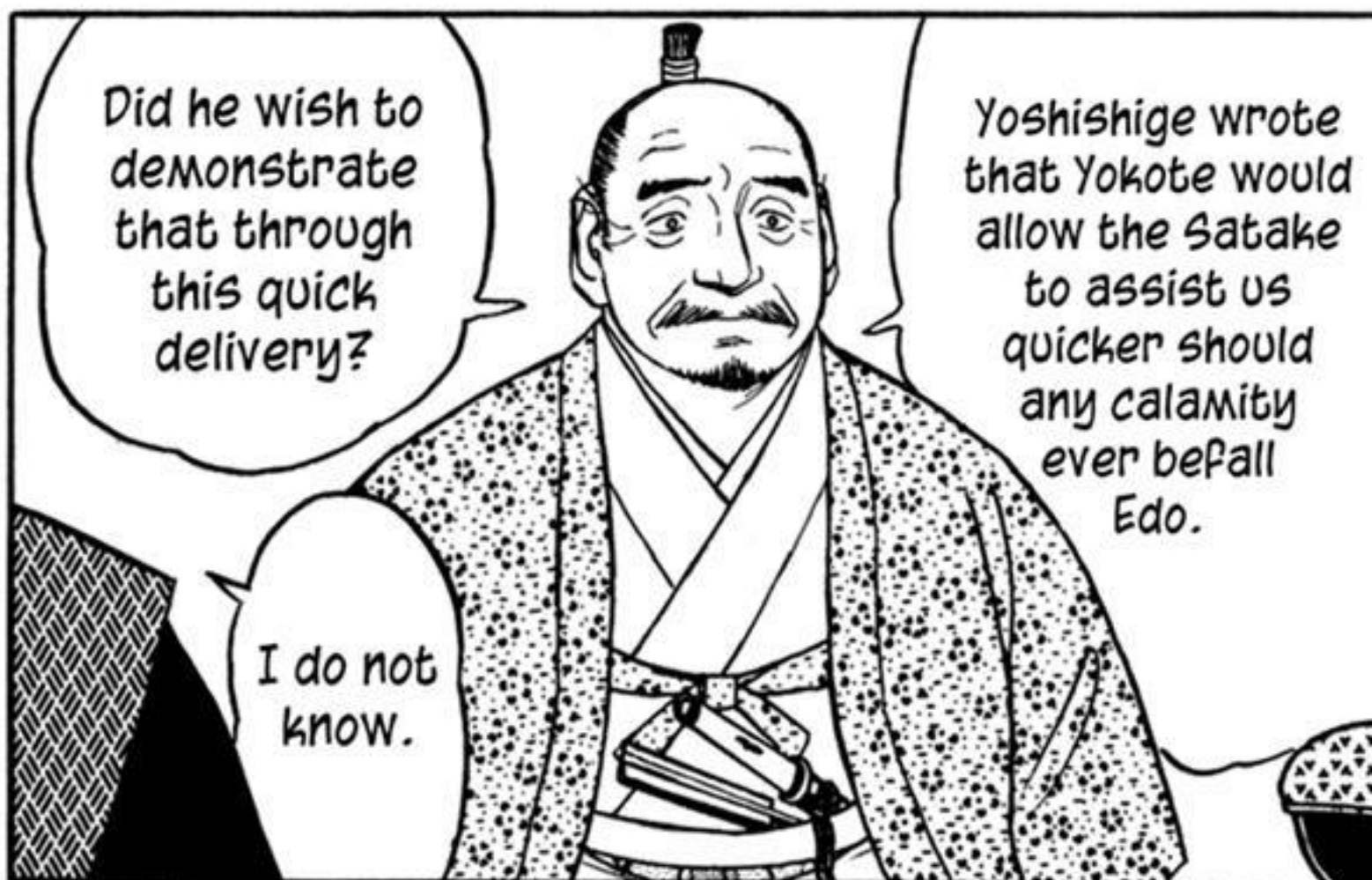


Did Yoshishige miswrite the date?



I doubt both father and son would accidentally write the wrong date...

Even if so, that would still make Yoshinobu's letter sent only five days ago.



Did he wish to demonstrate that through this quick delivery?

I do not know.

Yoshishige wrote that Yokote would allow the Satake to assist us quicker should any calamity ever befall Edo.



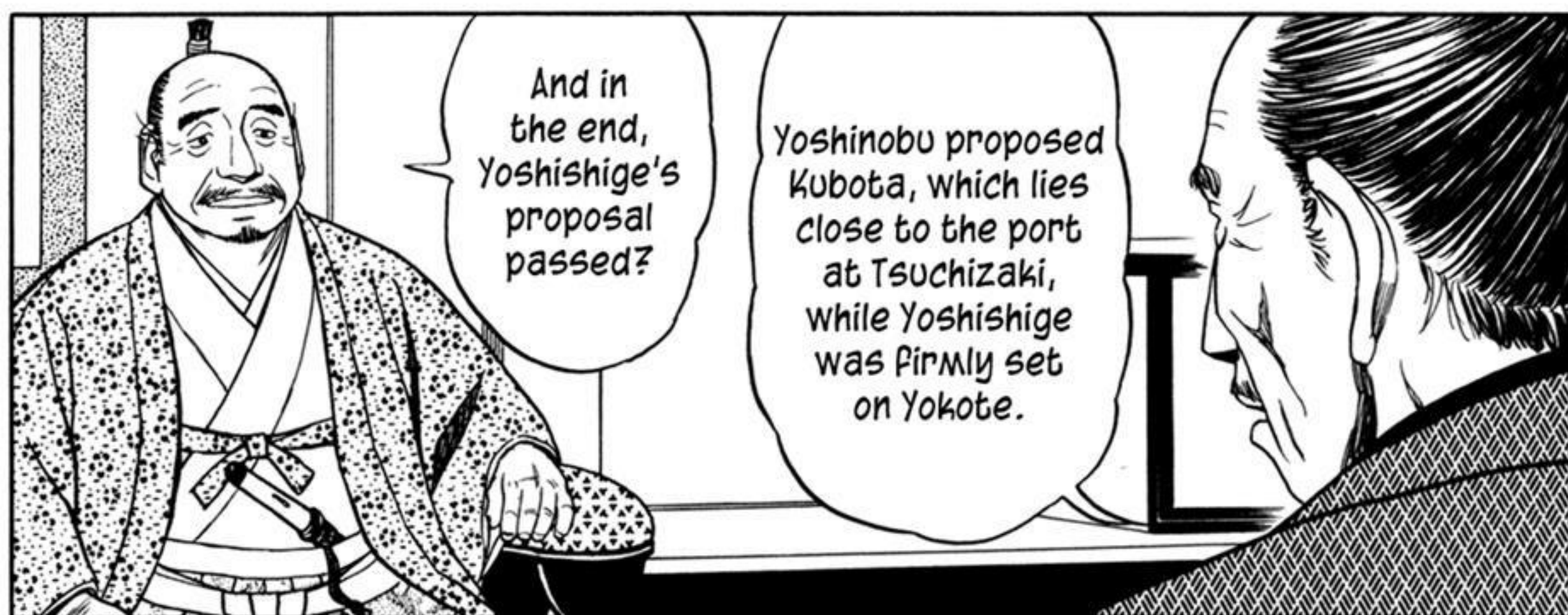
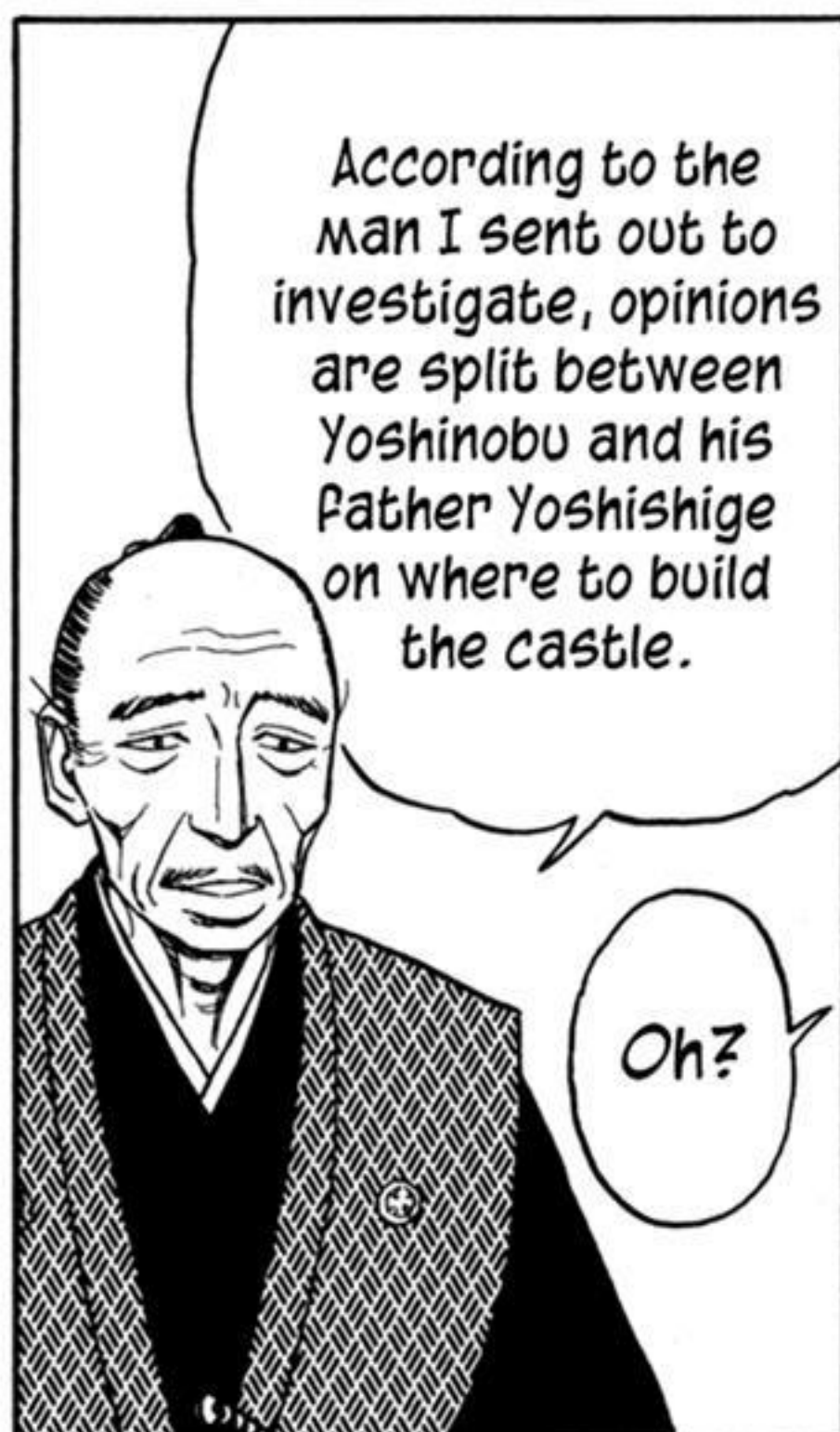
Perhaps if the messenger switched horses constantly... or if he were a ninja relying on some deceit...

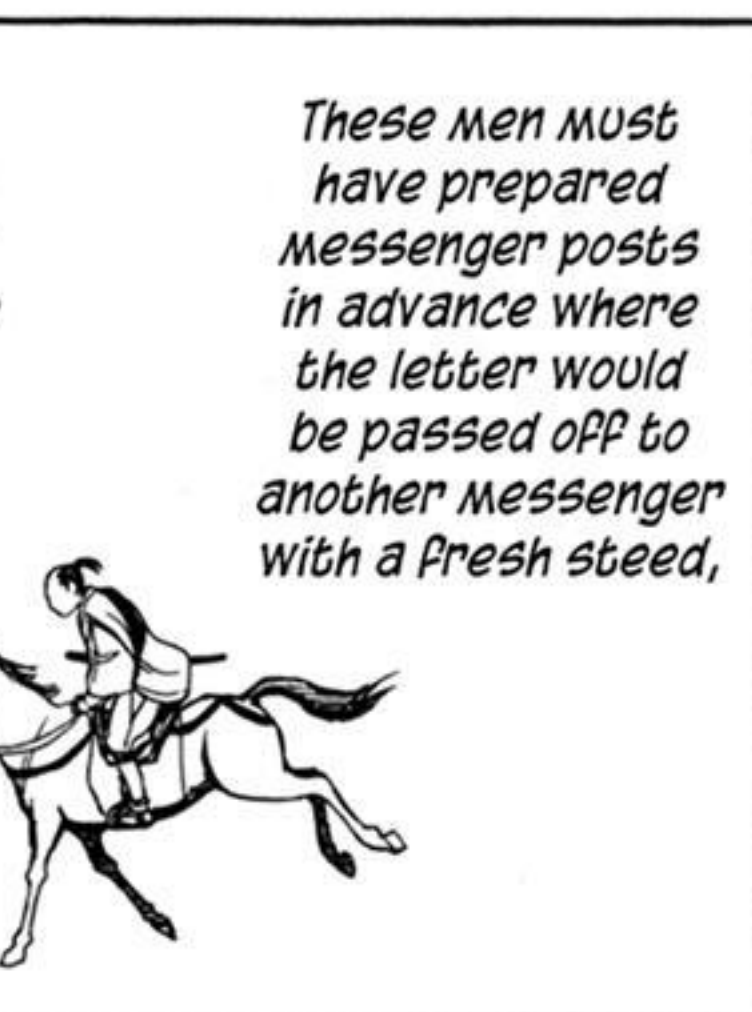
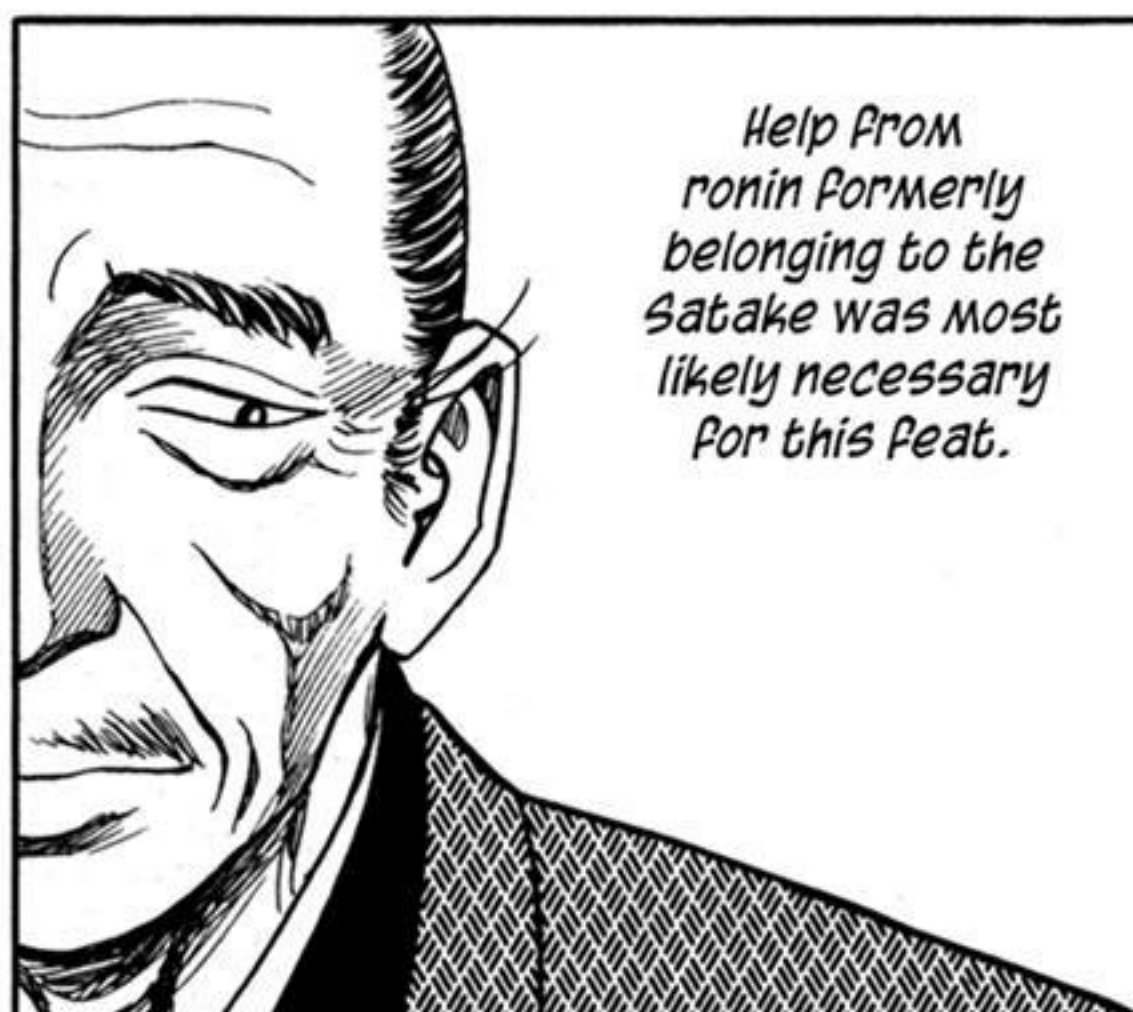
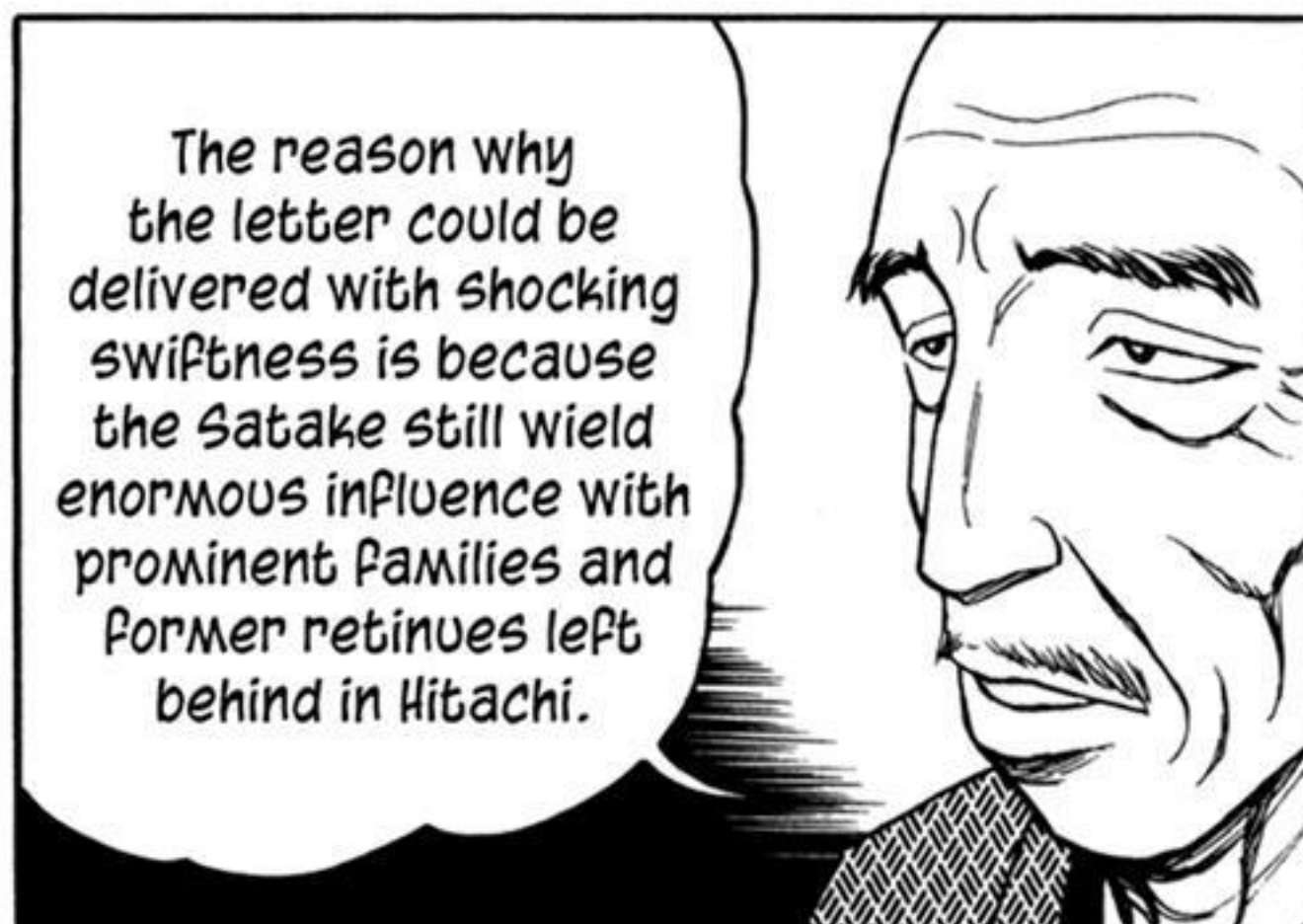


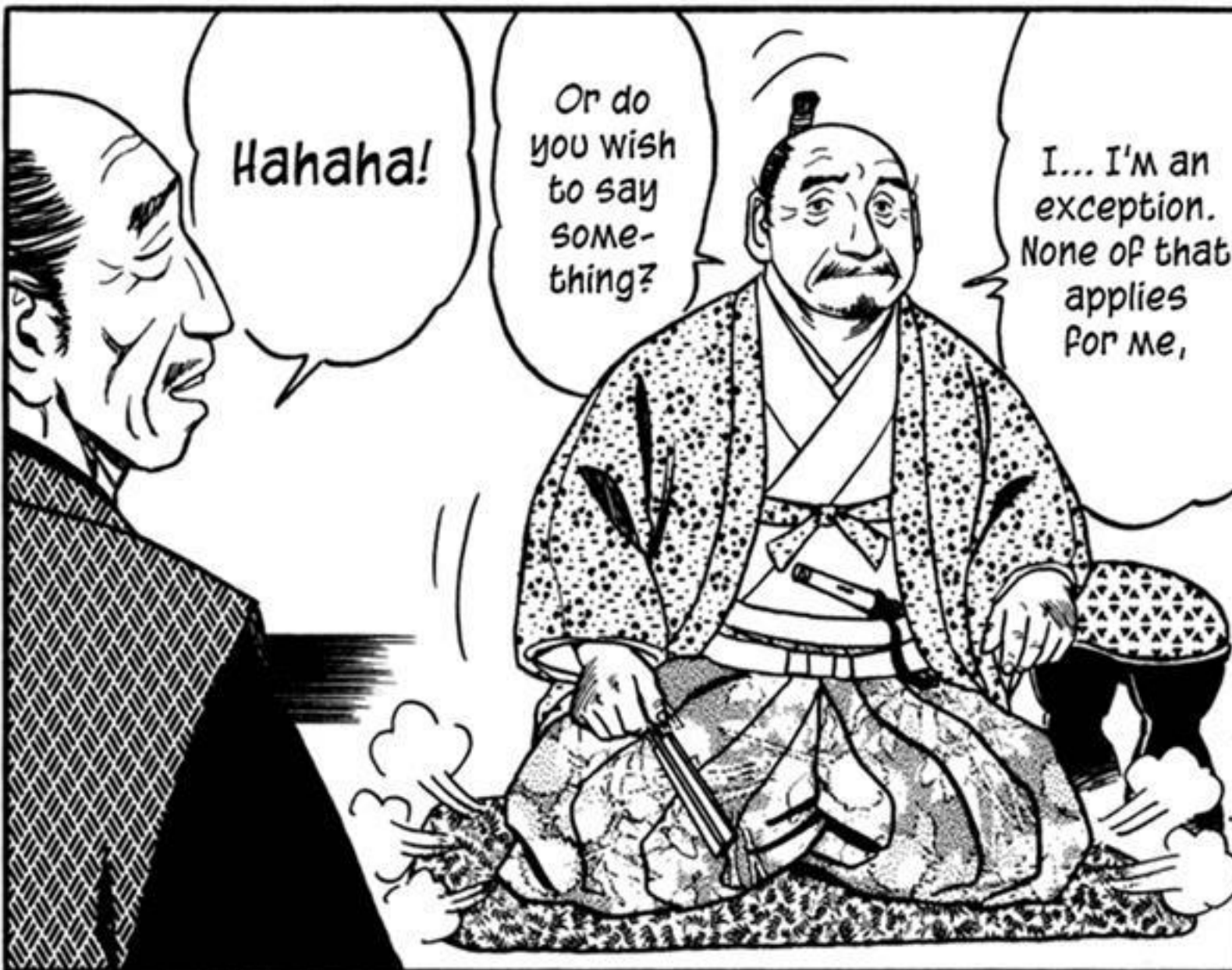
Yes, my lord...

HMM... It seems there's a need for us to take a closer look at the Satake clan.

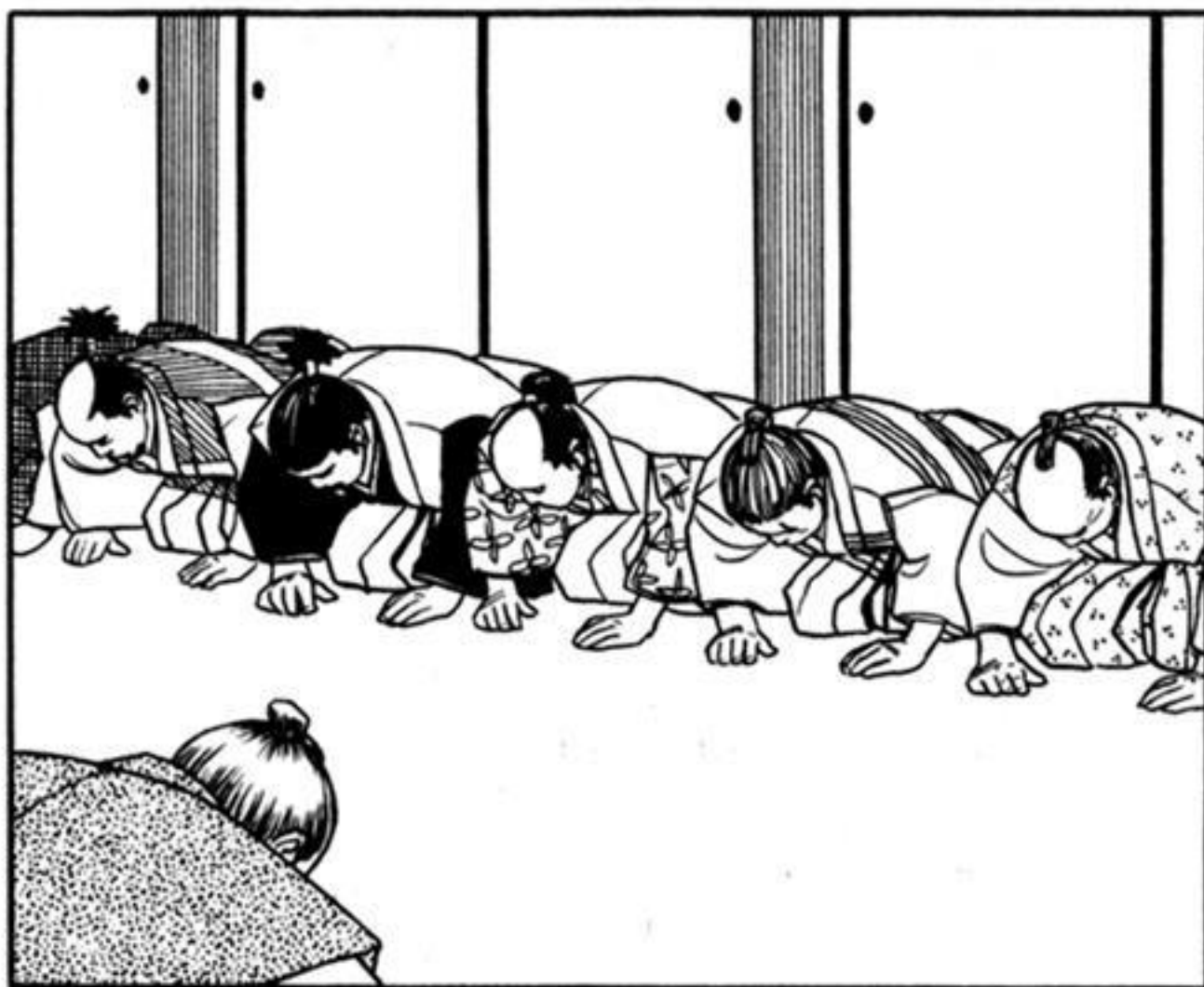


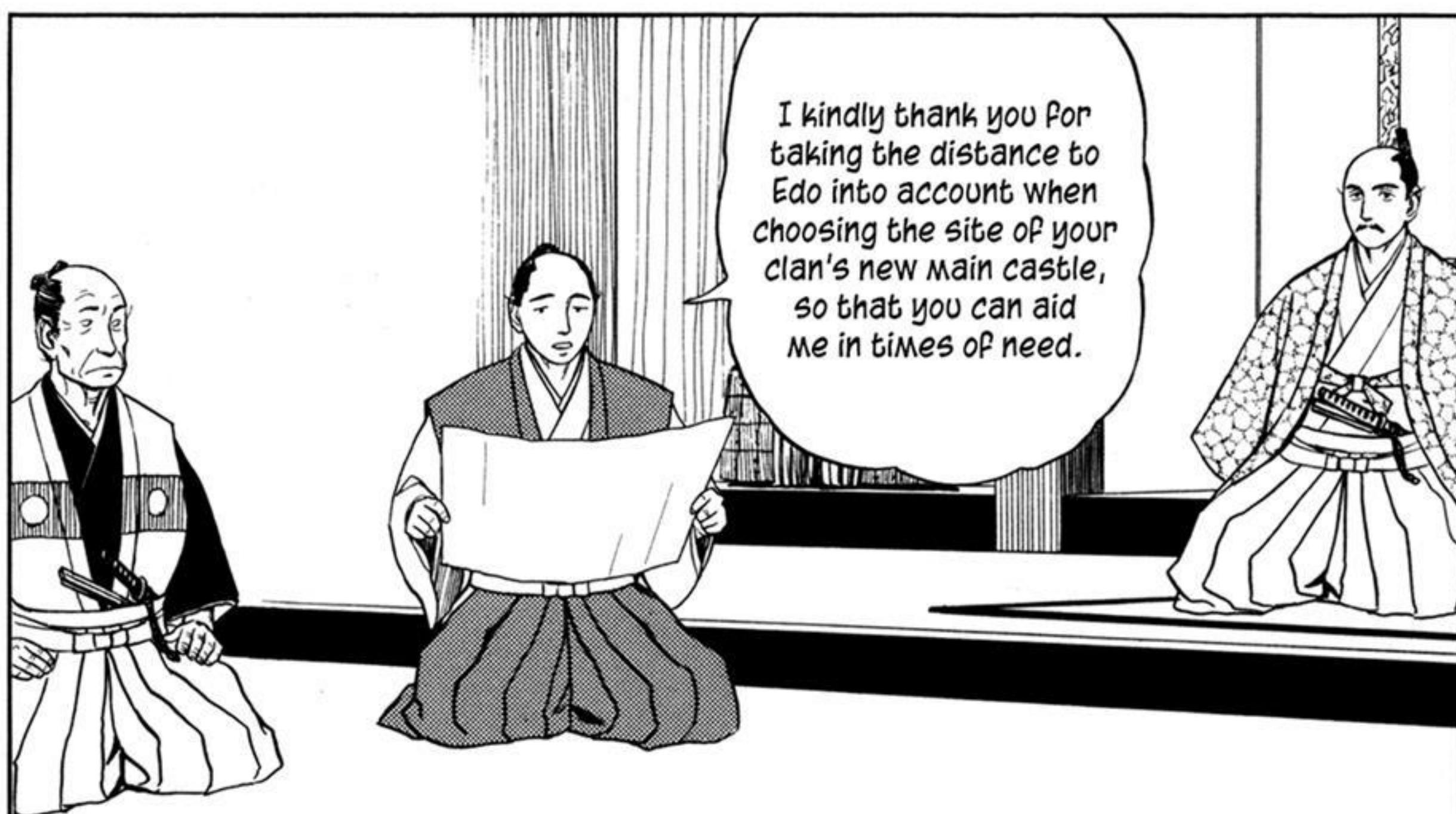
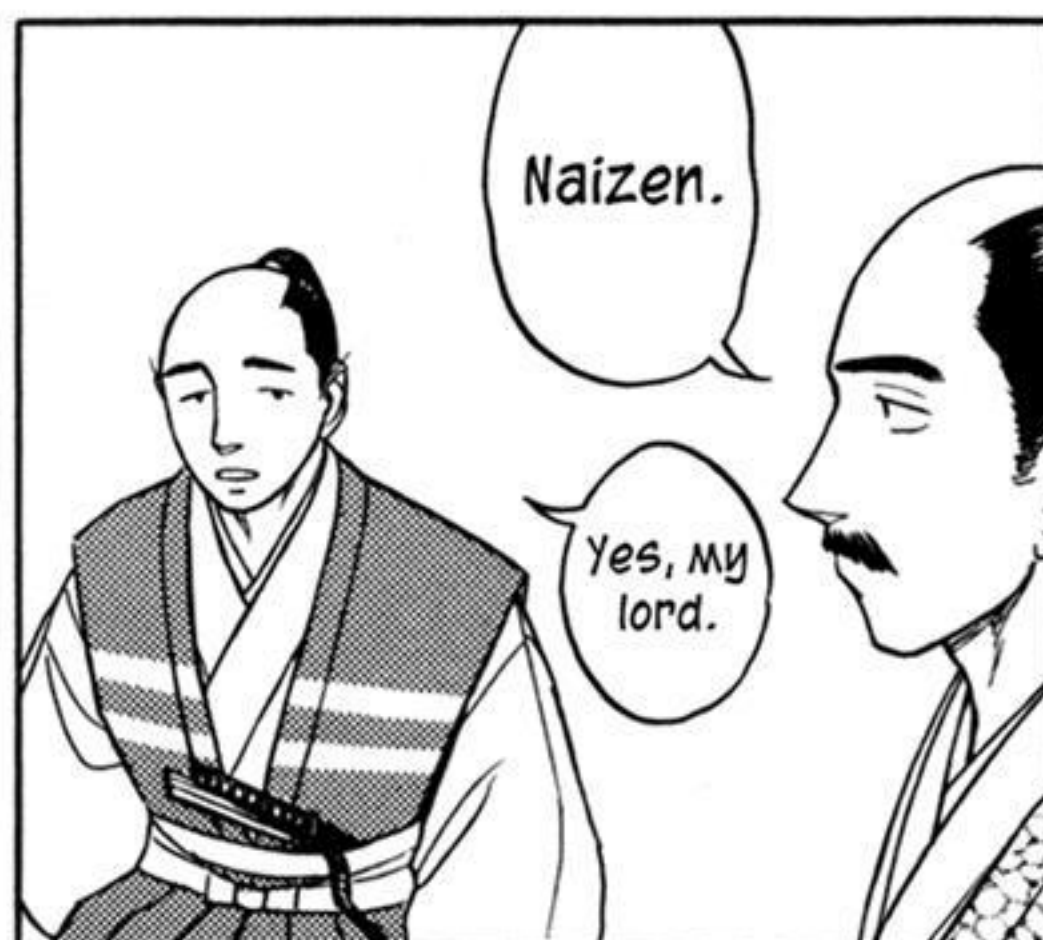
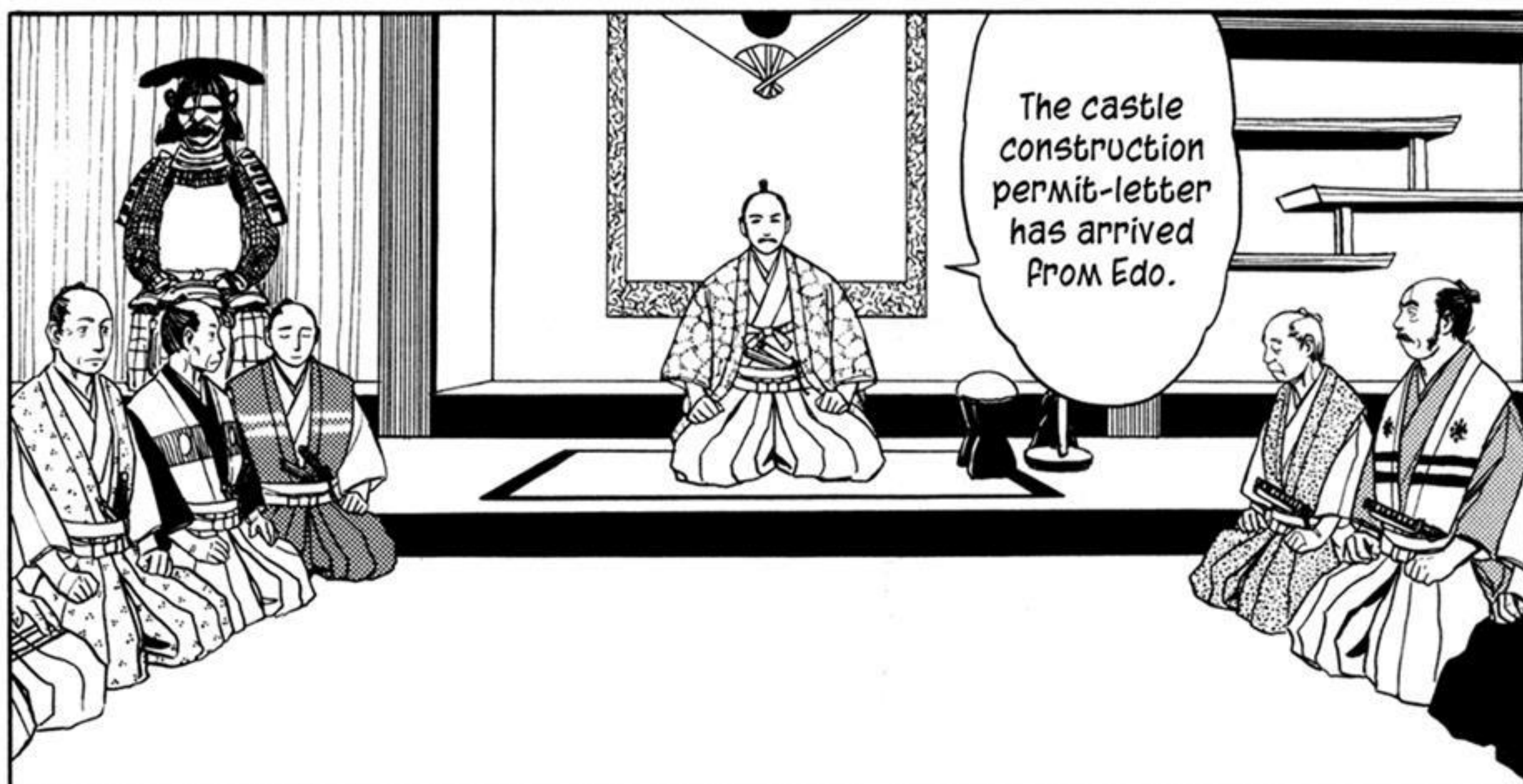


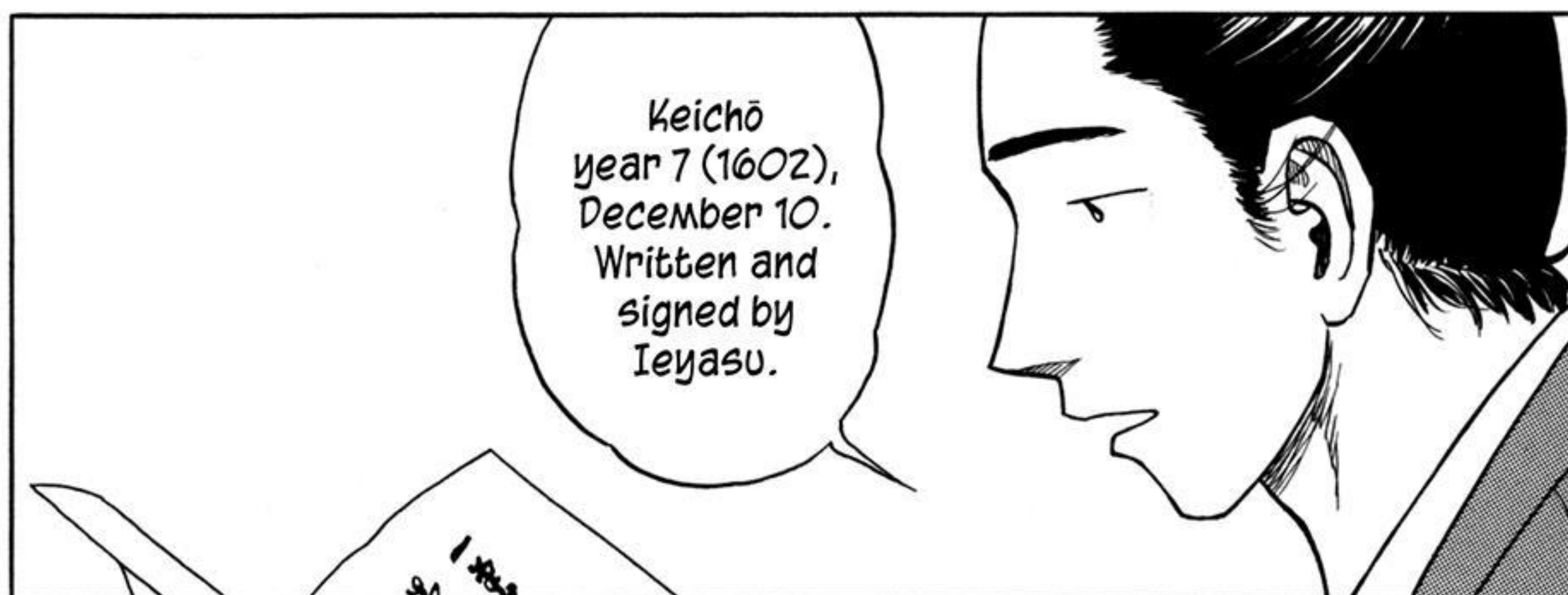


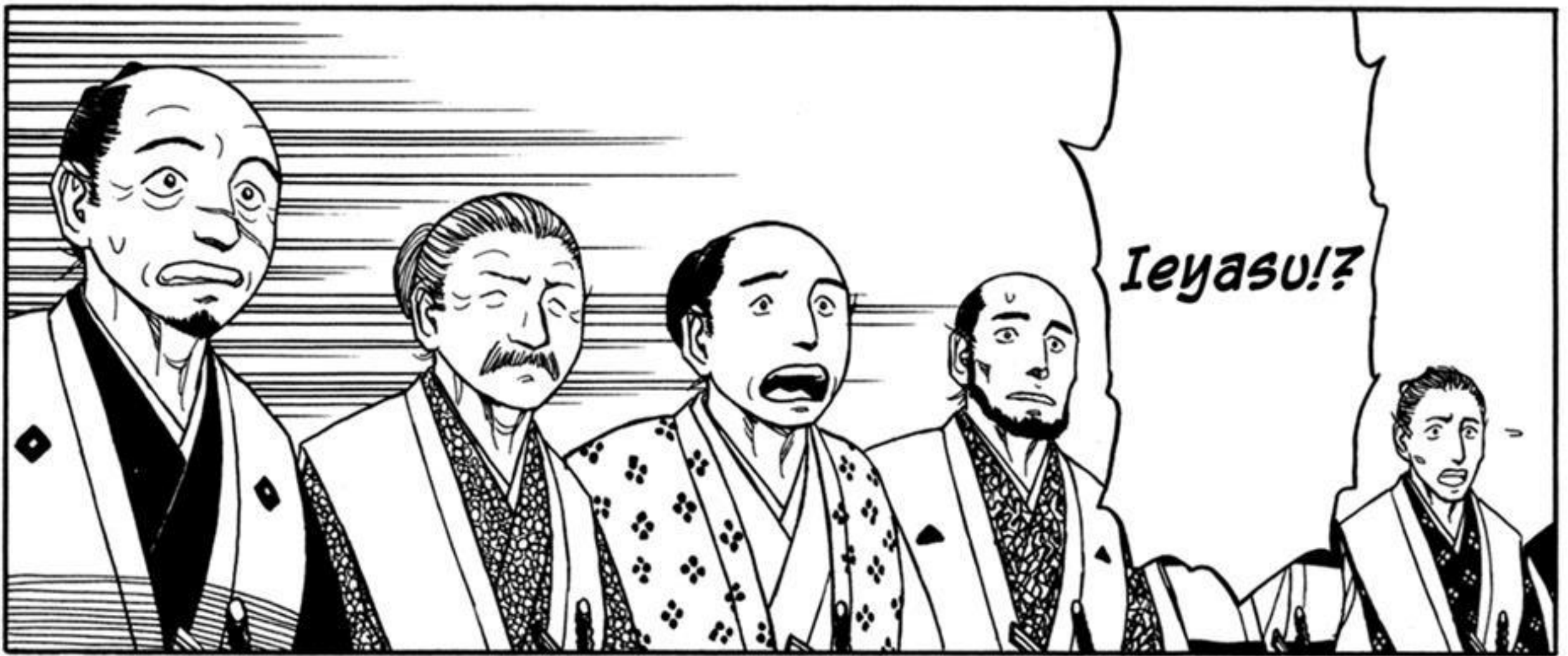


Dewa,
Tsuchizaki-
Port









*Incon-
ceivable!*

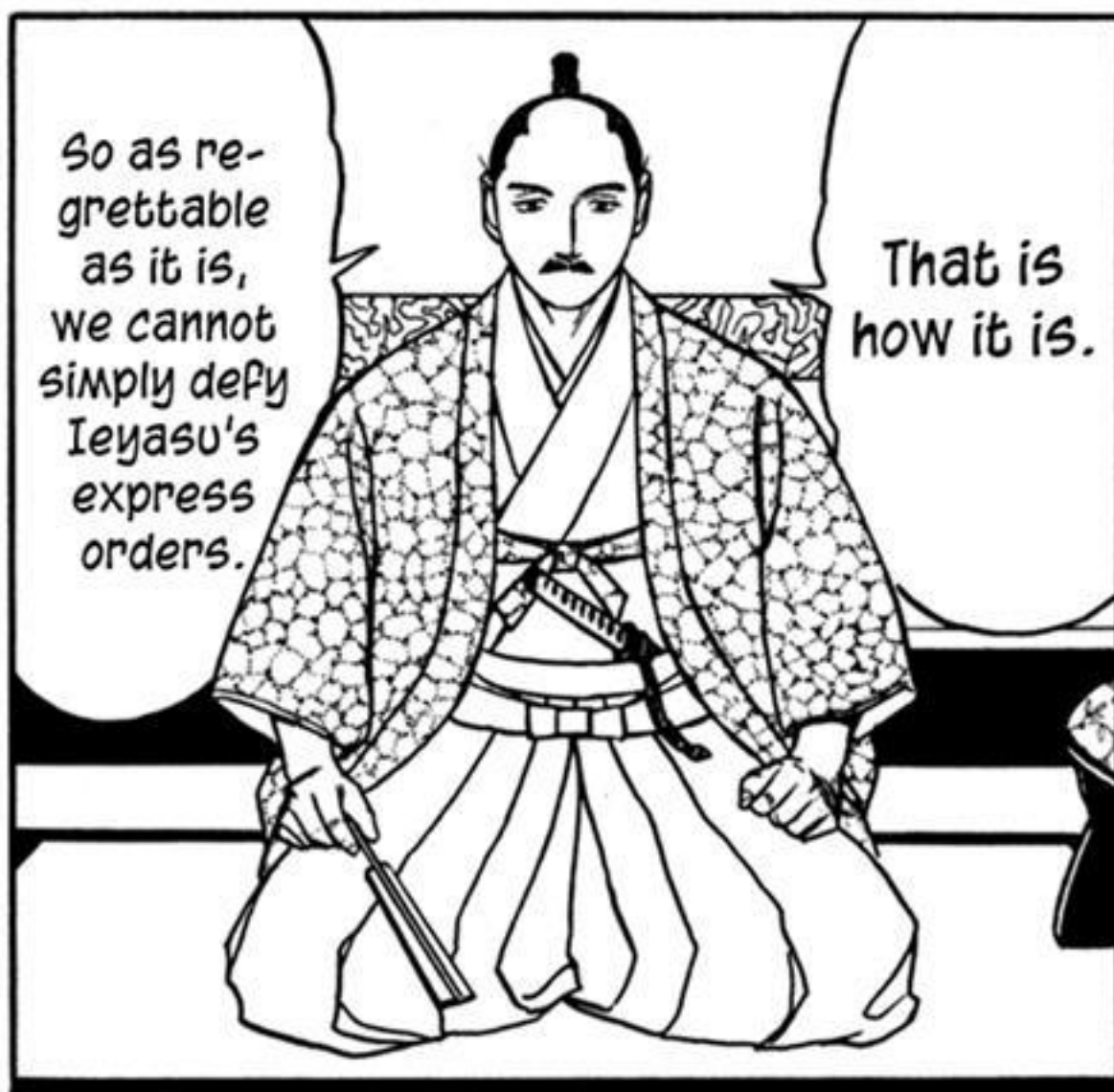
*Impossible...
He prompted
Ieyasu to
personally
take
action!?*



養正

So as re-
grettable
as it is,
we cannot
simply defy
Ieyasu's
express
orders.

That is
how it is.



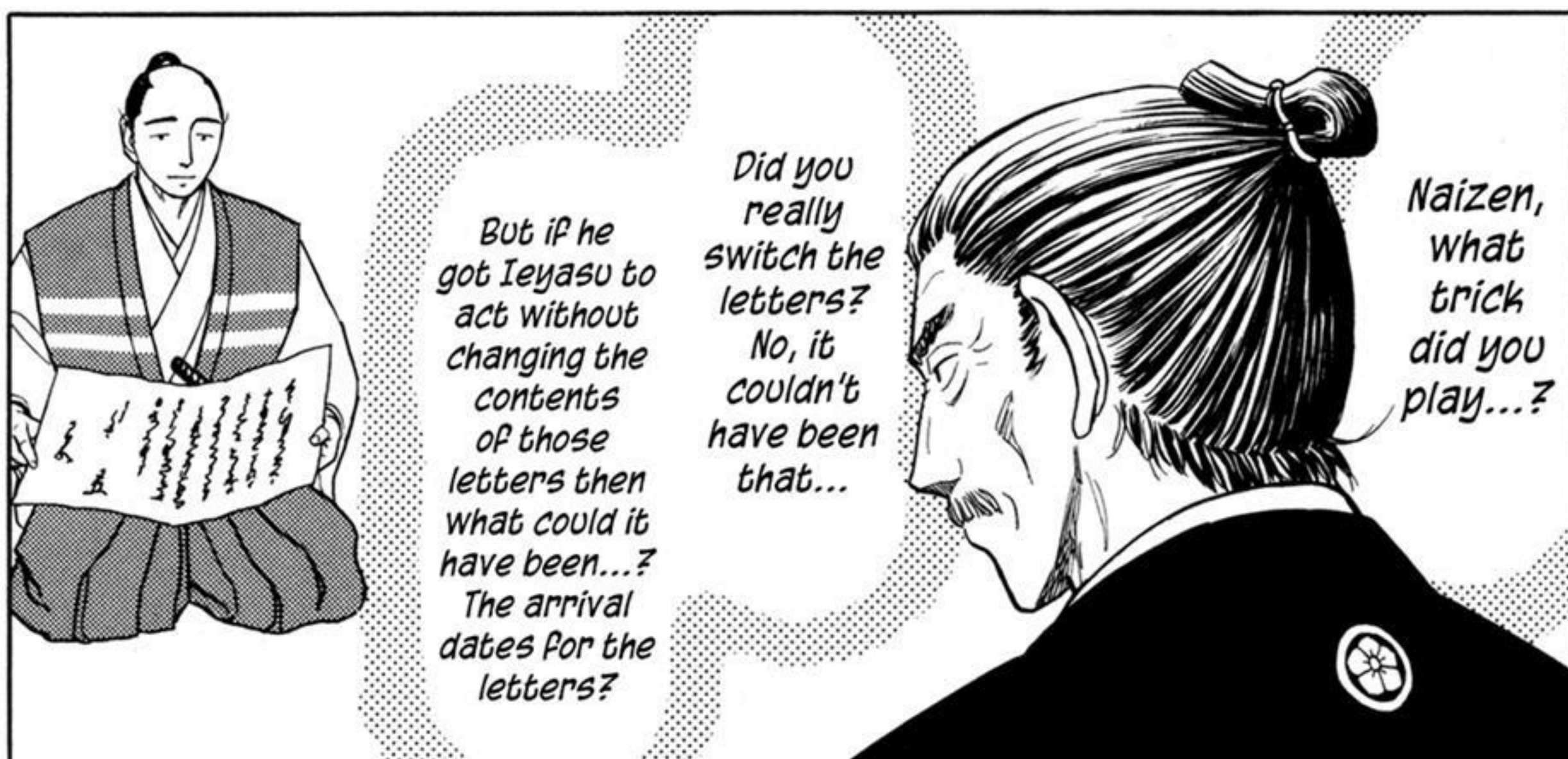
...



Will be
changed to
Kubota!

Thus, the site
of our clan's
new castle,











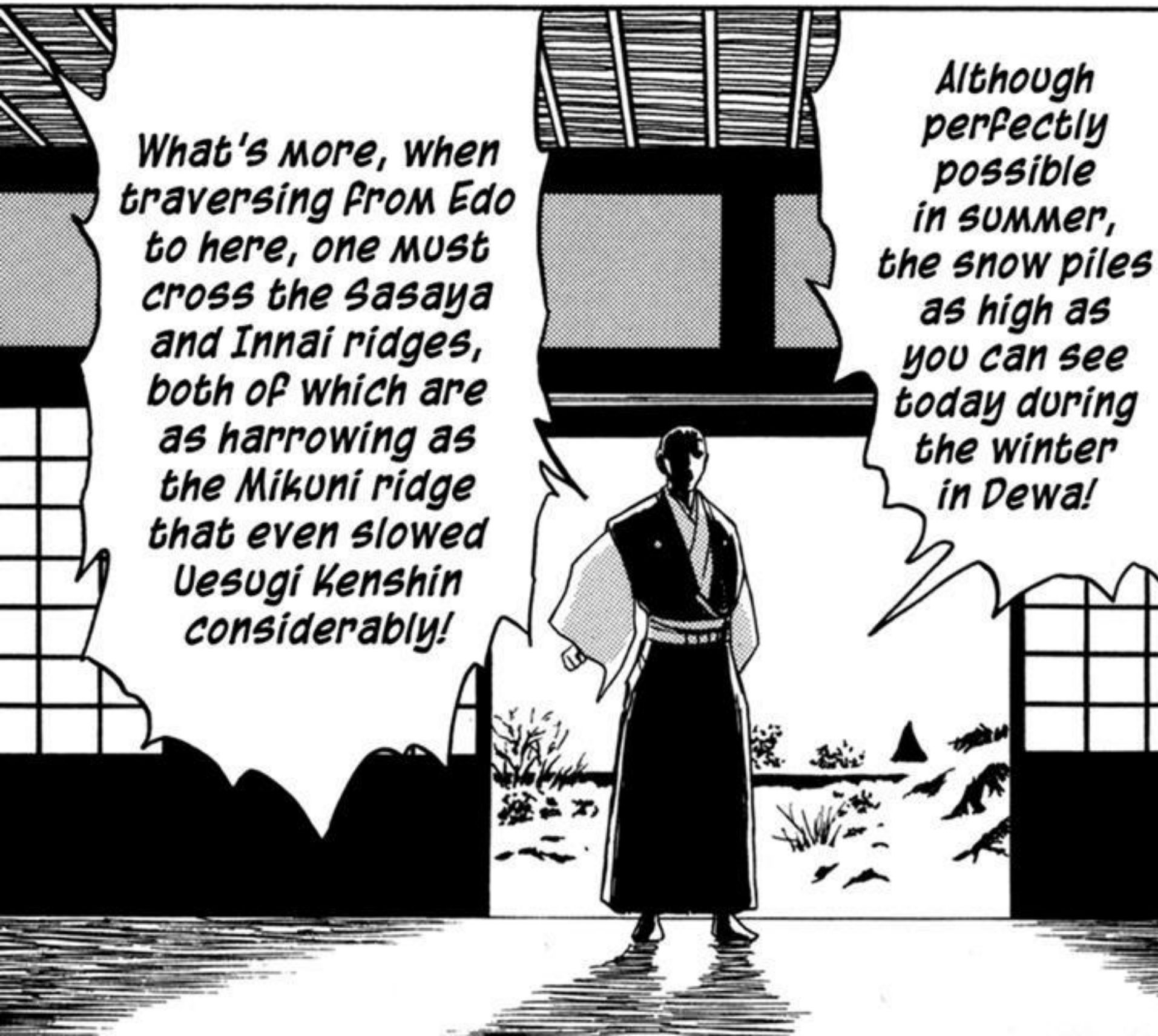
*That letter
is marked
December
10th!*

*Only
five days
prior to!*



*But that is
only in normal
circumstances!*

*It is true that
a fifteen days'
travel is normal
between Edo and
Tsuchizaki!*



*What's more, when
traversing from Edo
to here, one must
cross the Sasaya
and Innai ridges,
both of which are
as harrowing as
the Mikuni ridge
that even slowed
Uesugi Kenshin
considerably!*

*Although
perfectly
possible
in summer,
the snow piles
as high as
you can see
today during
the winter
in Dewa!*



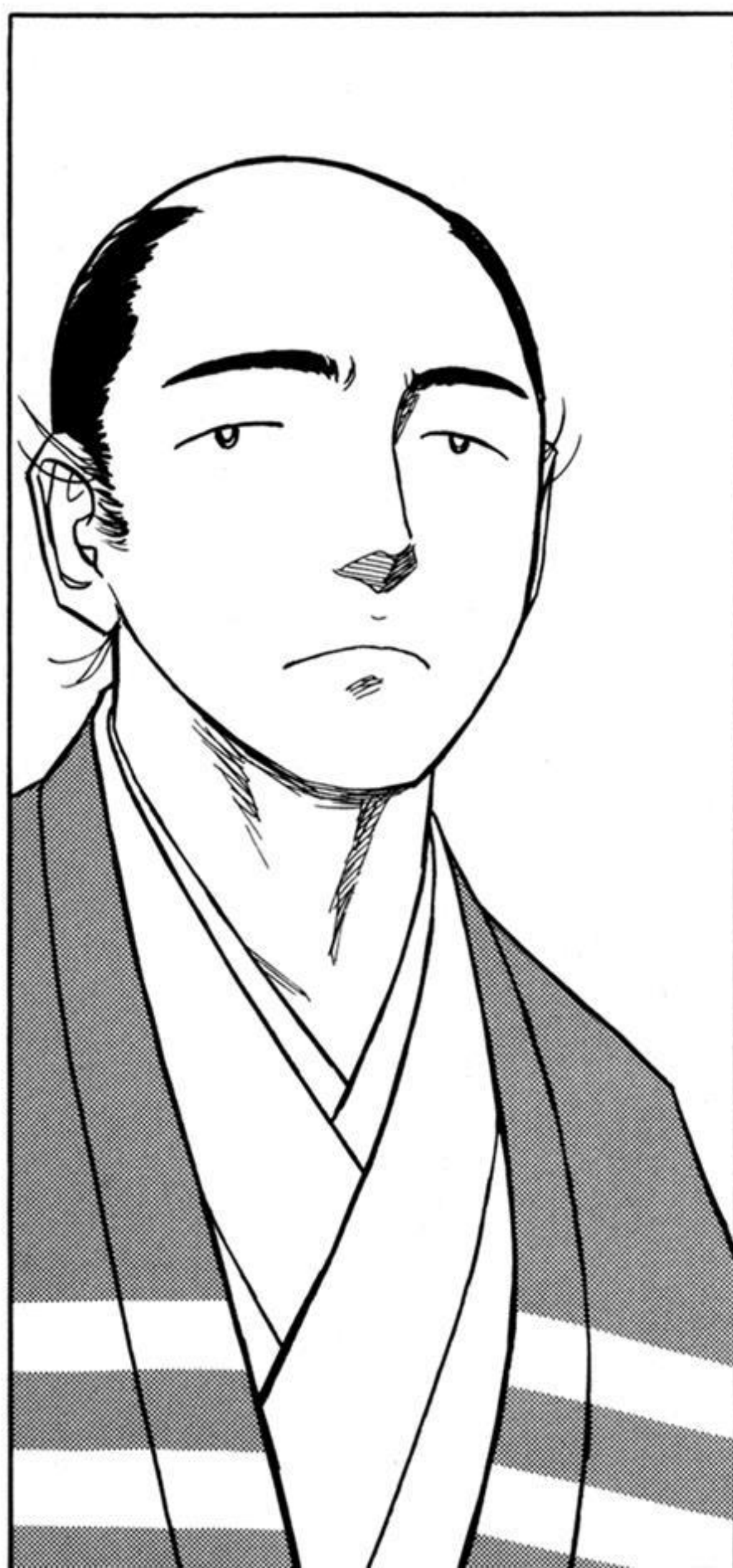
Ahh...



You're
right....!



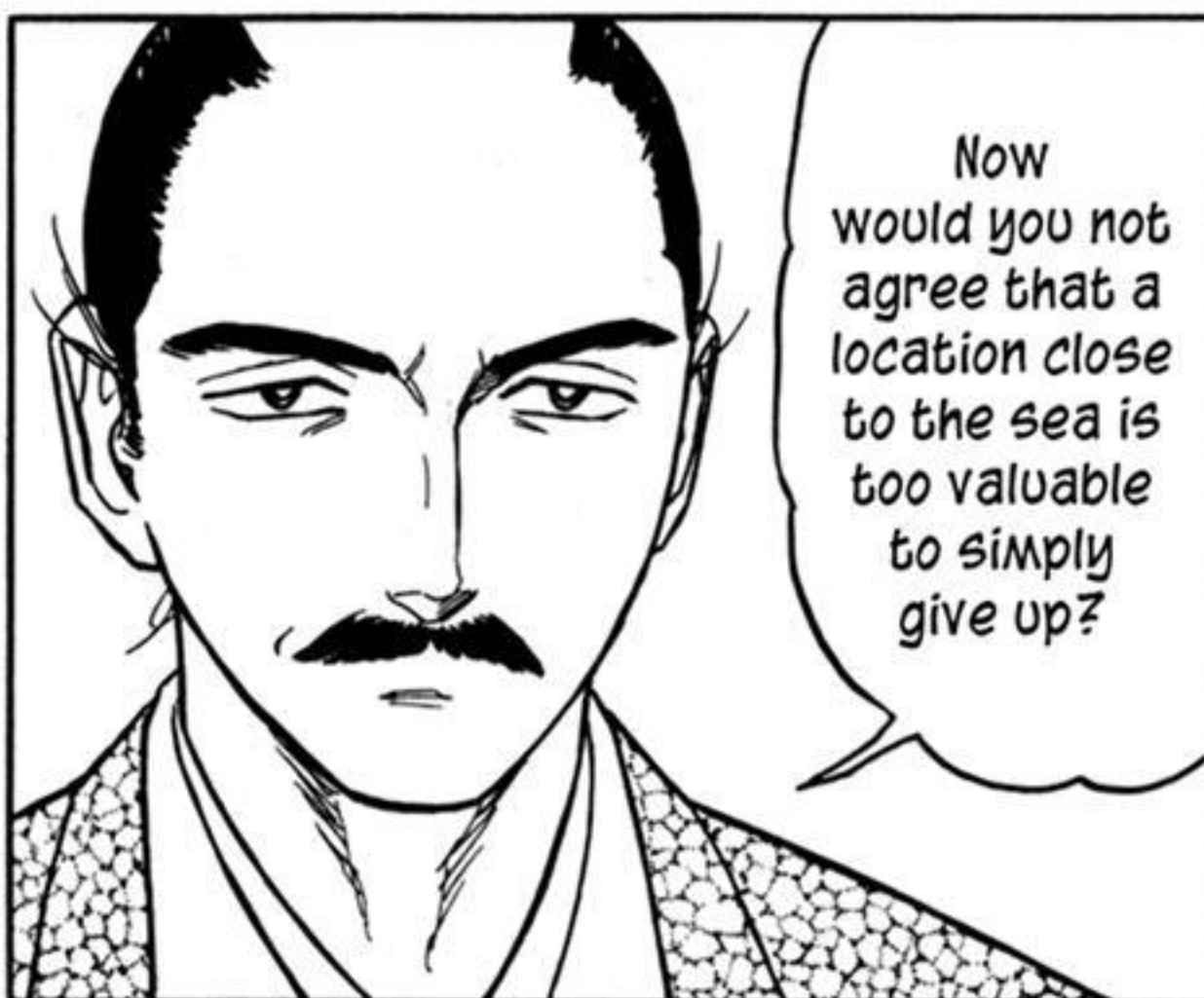
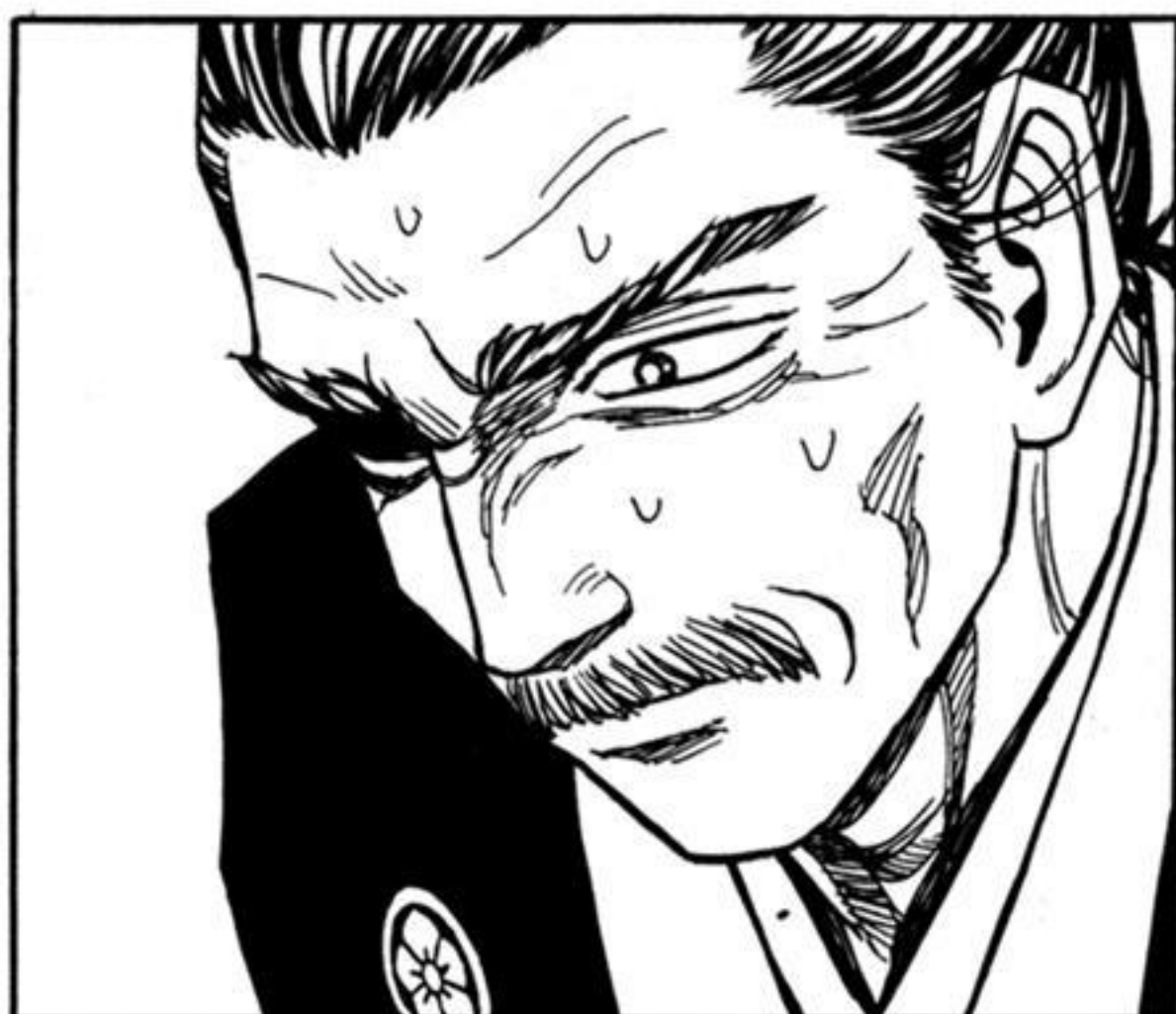
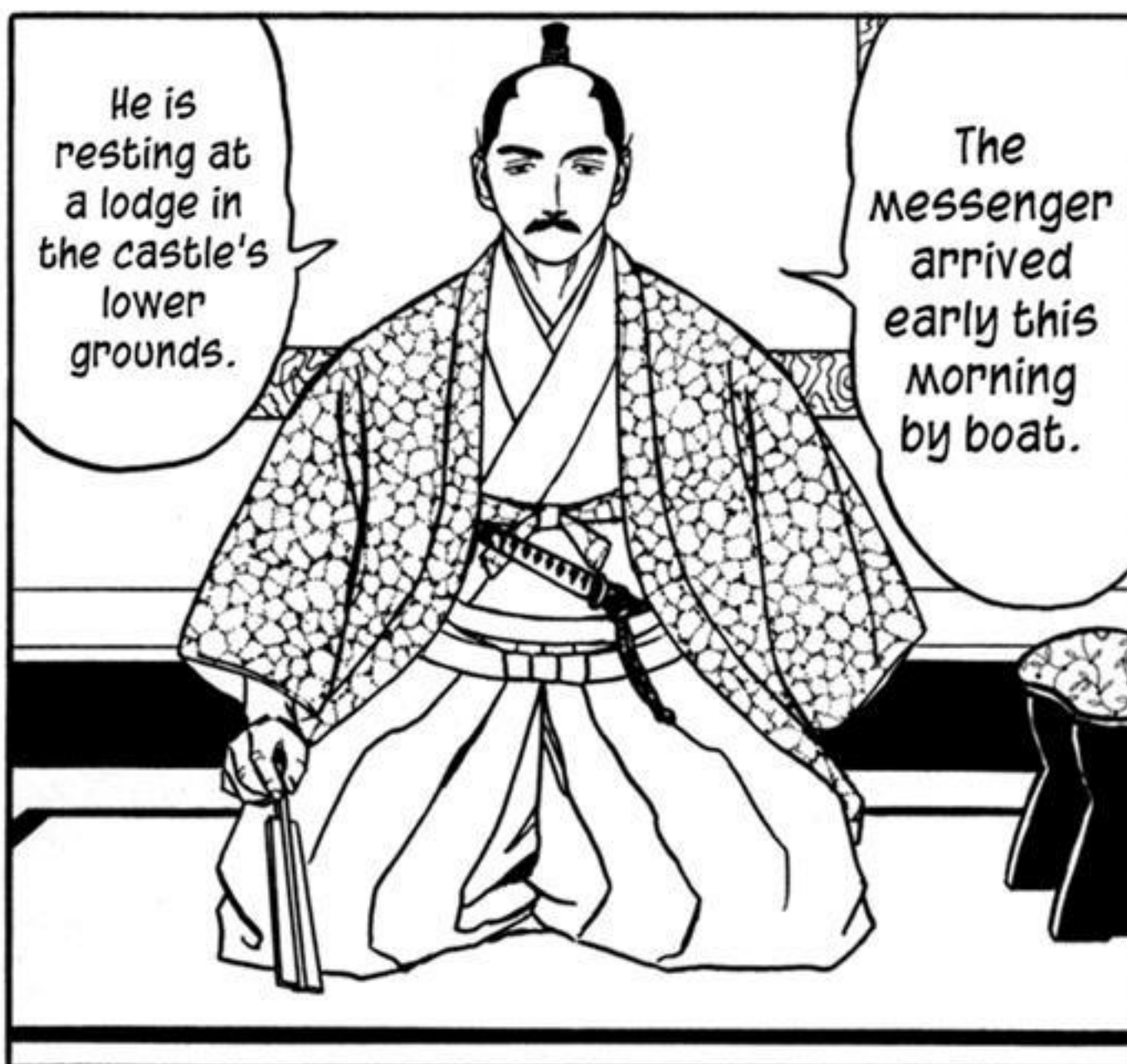
To cross
these two snowy
ridges and reach
Tsuchizaki in
half a month is
inconceivable!



And just
where is this
messenger
from Edo
now!?

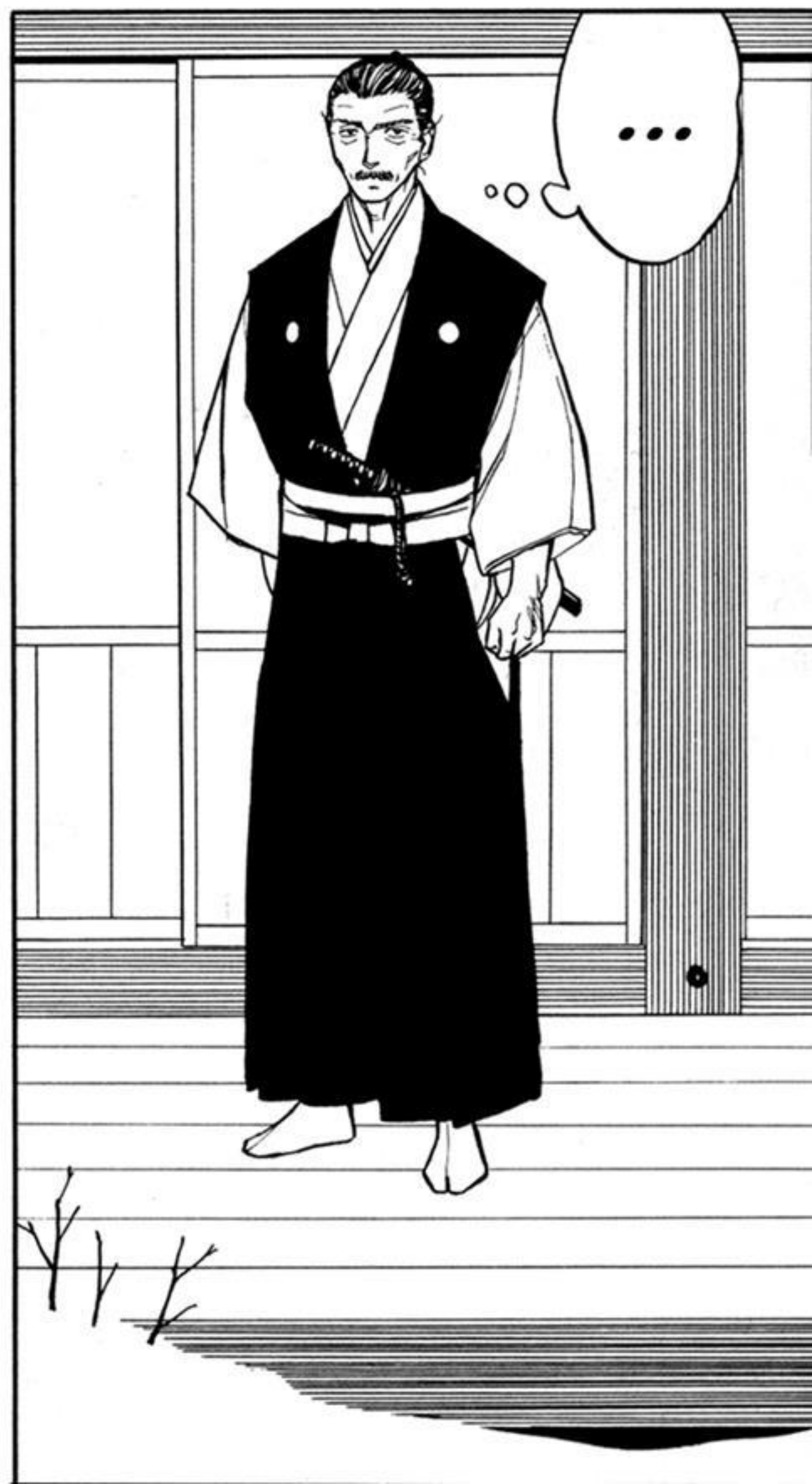
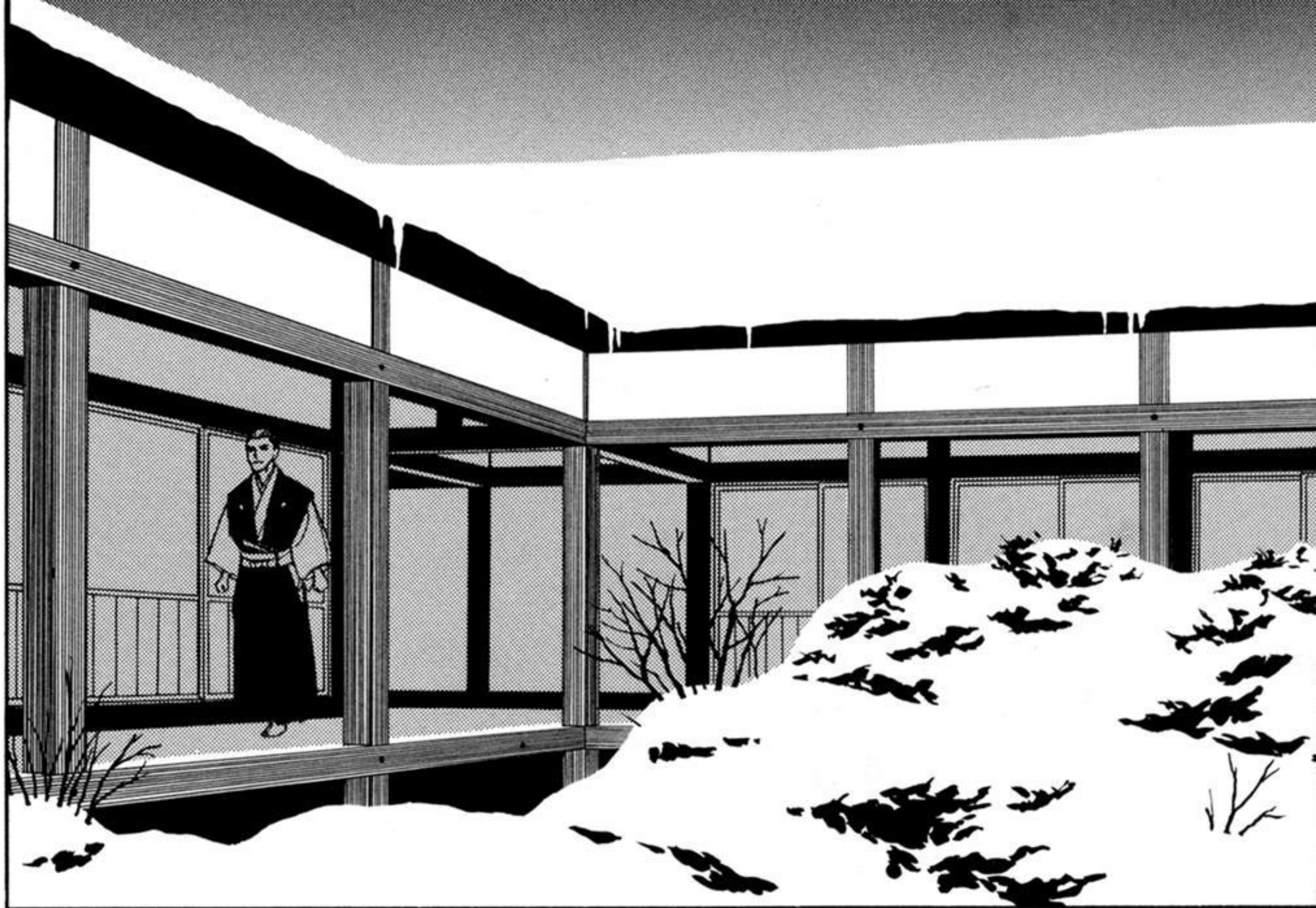


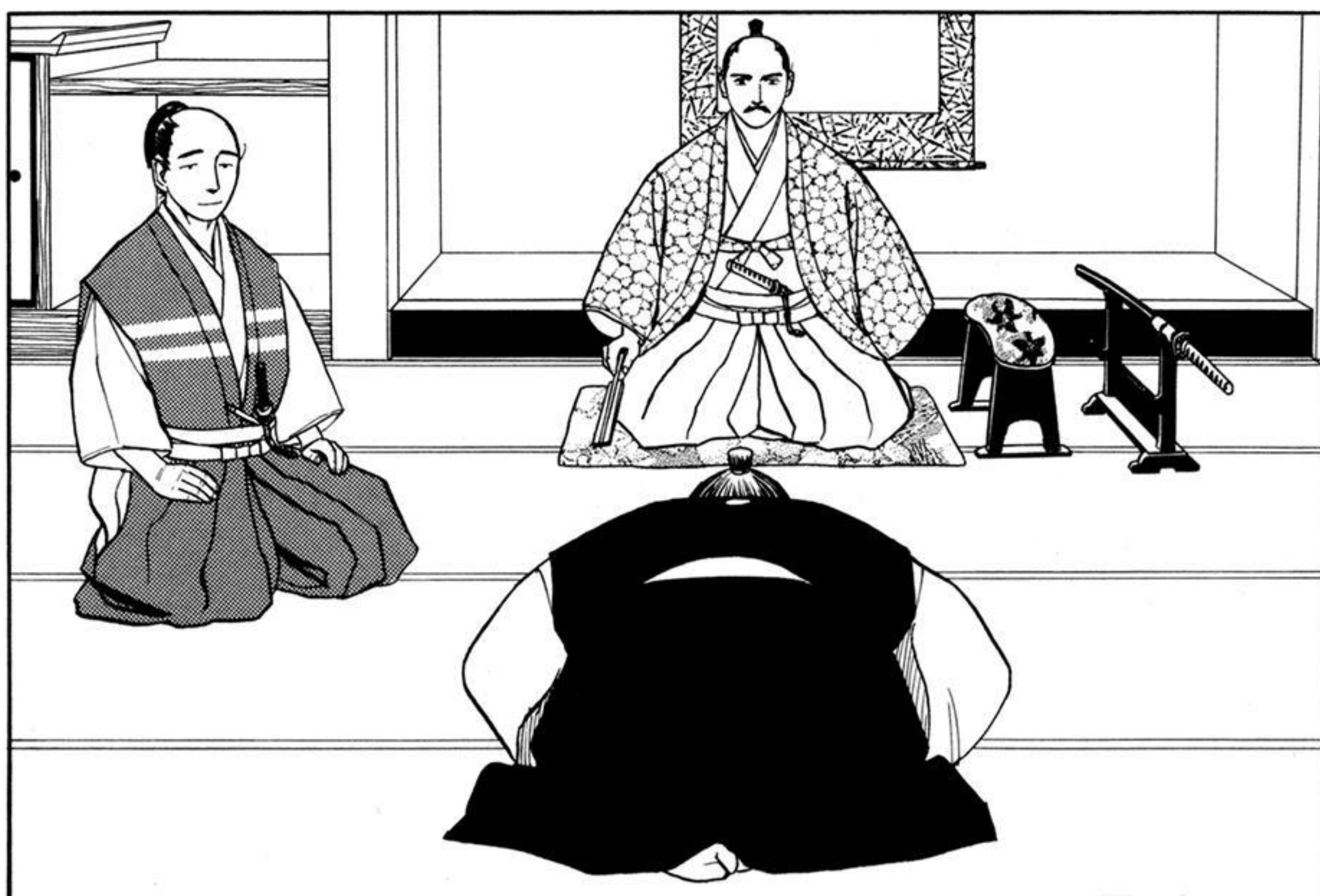
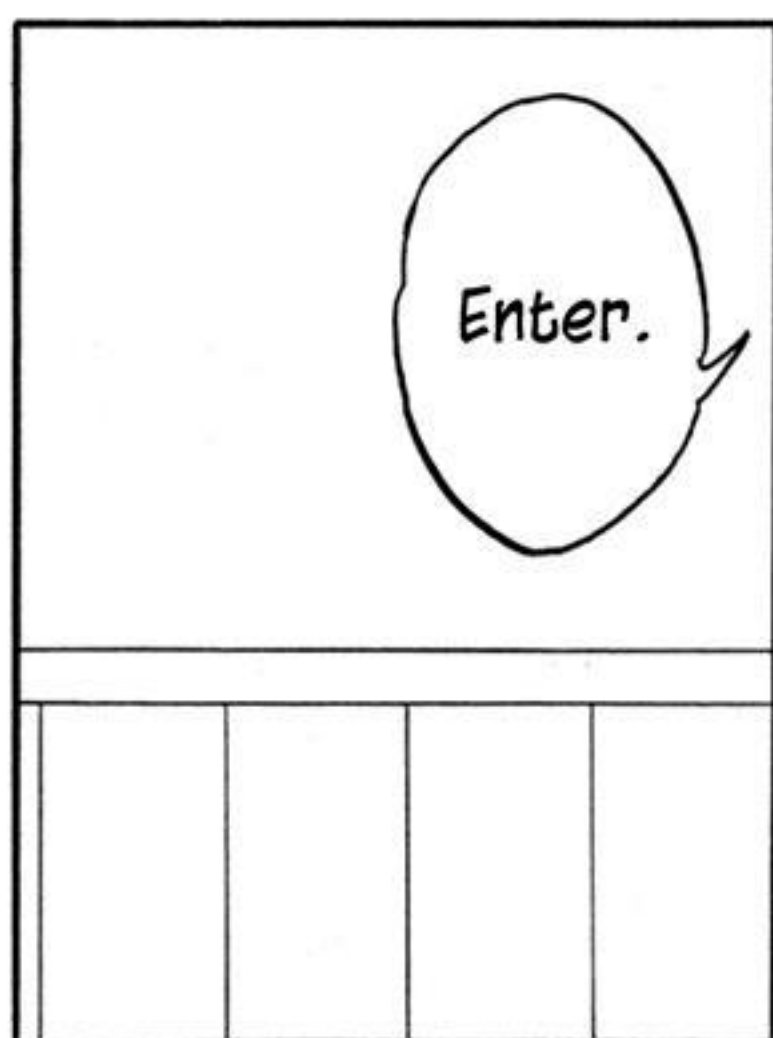


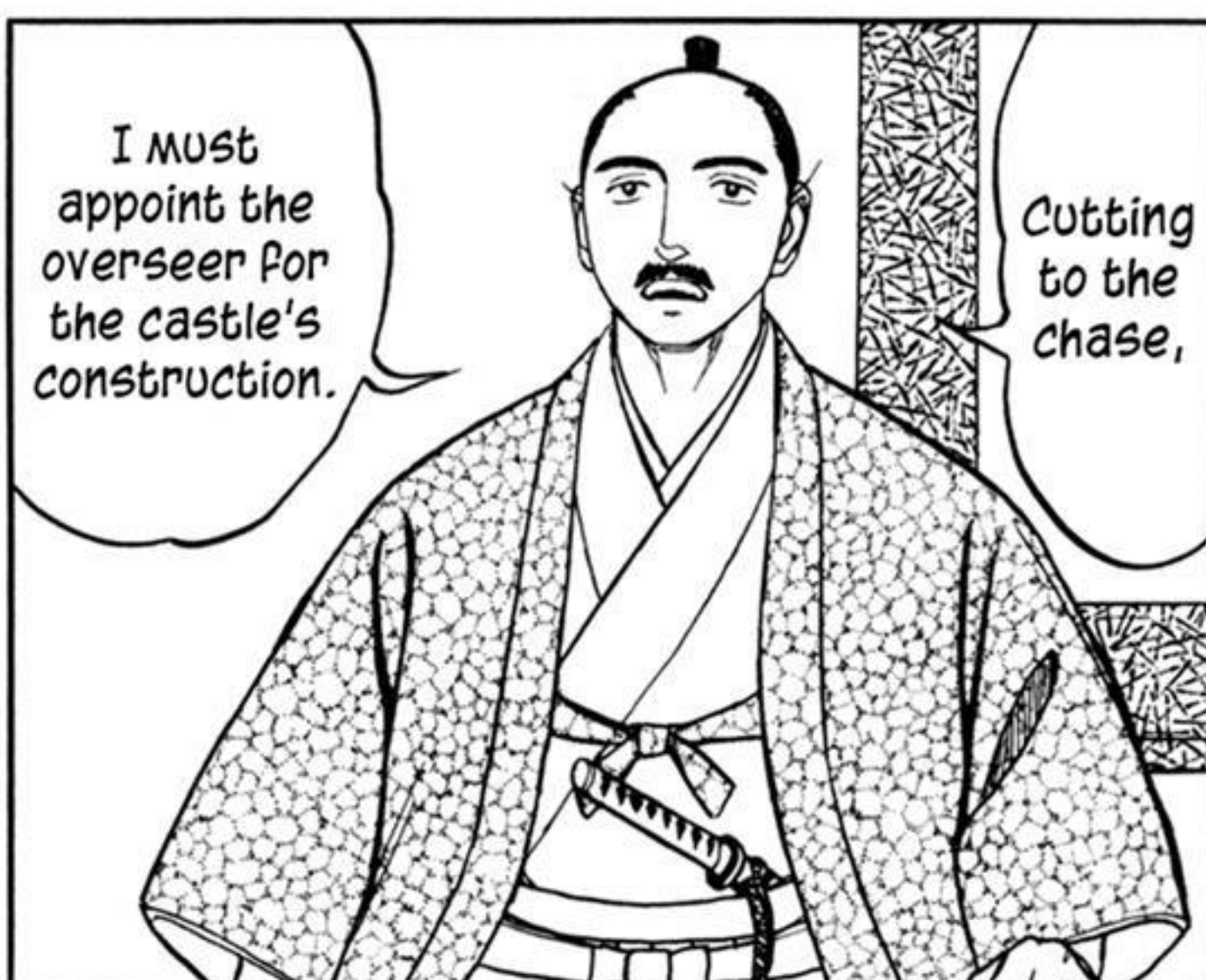


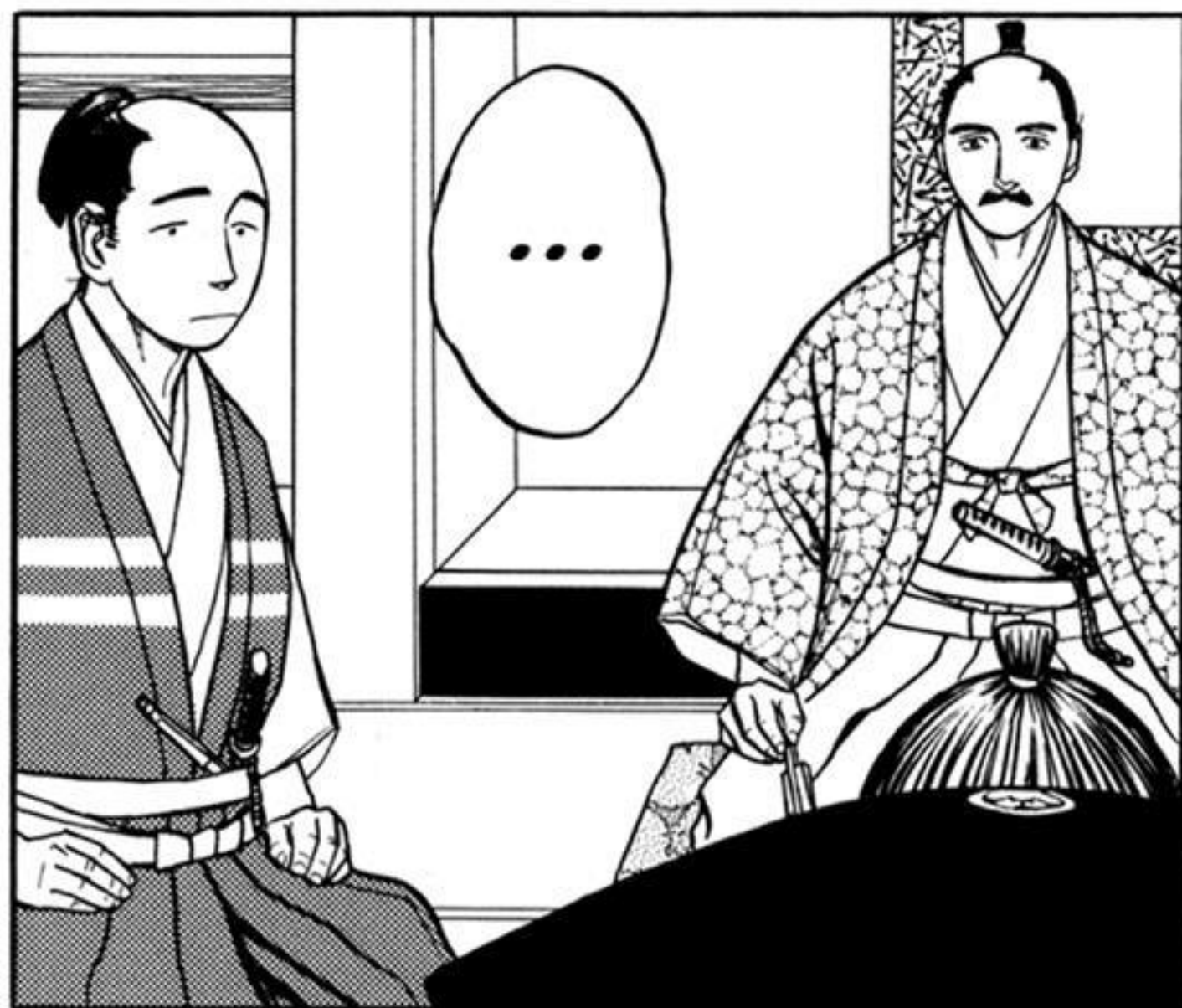
Chapter 4: Beyond the Ridge









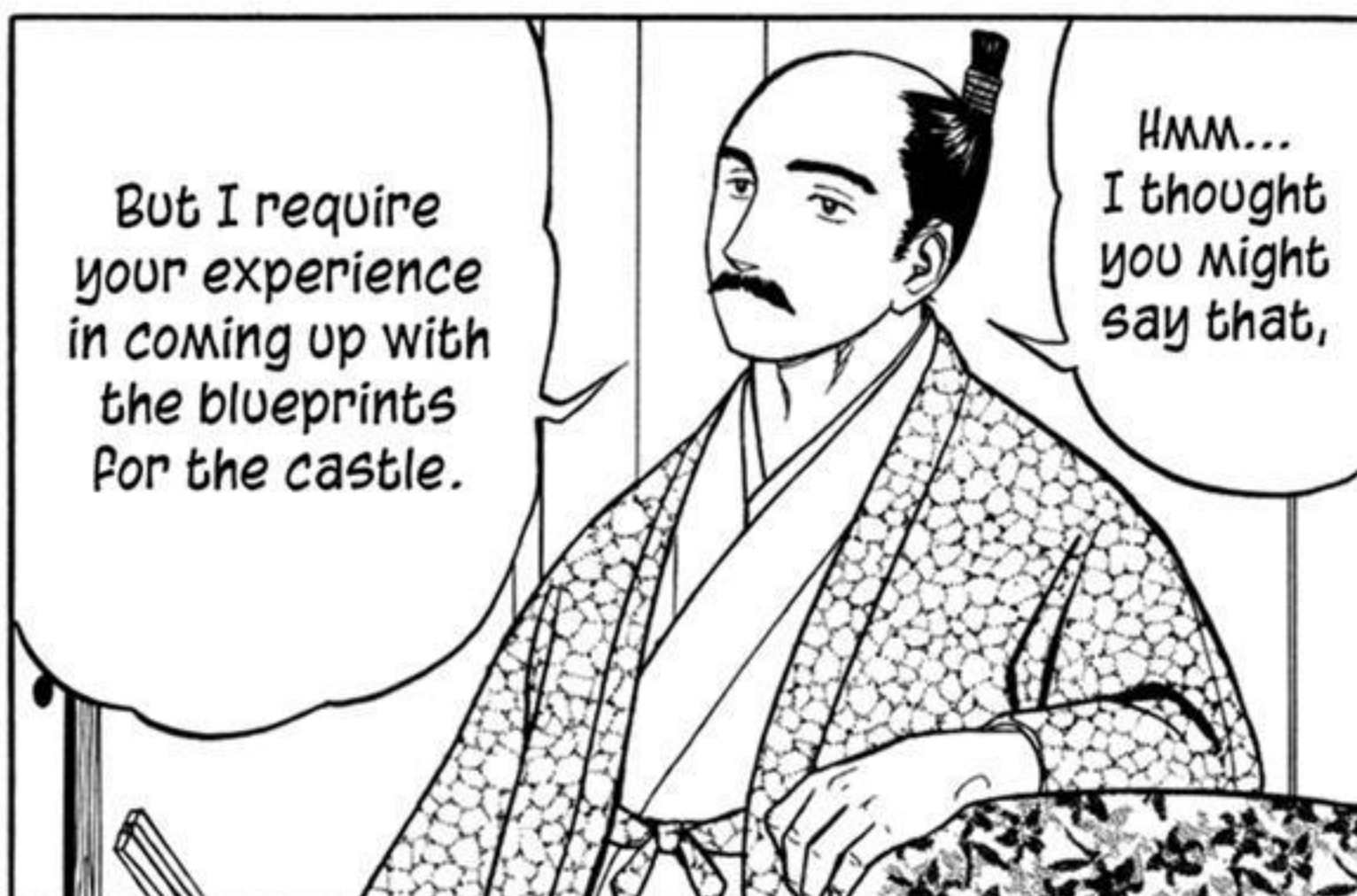


I am humbled by your offer, but please allow me to refuse!

I shamefully admit I am not qualified for such a task!



It is not only me, but Naizen as well who requests your wisdom.



But I require your experience in coming up with the blueprints for the castle.

HMM... I thought you might say that,



As the experienced strategist of our clan, you are the most suitable man to help build the new castle.

Although I have much experience in surveying and marking off farmlands, castles are an entirely separate matter in which I am a complete novice.





Furthermore,
I may be an
experienced
strategist... But
you have bested
me, Naizen...



I was
the leader of the
anti-Kubota faction!
I have not even an
inkling as to what
an ideal castle at
Kubota requires!

No, no,
no...!



In any case,
please throw
away trifling
personal worries
and assist me in
the construction!



Whatever
are you
talking
about...?

Hm...?



Oh dear,
I don't think
I can handle
it all alone,
however...

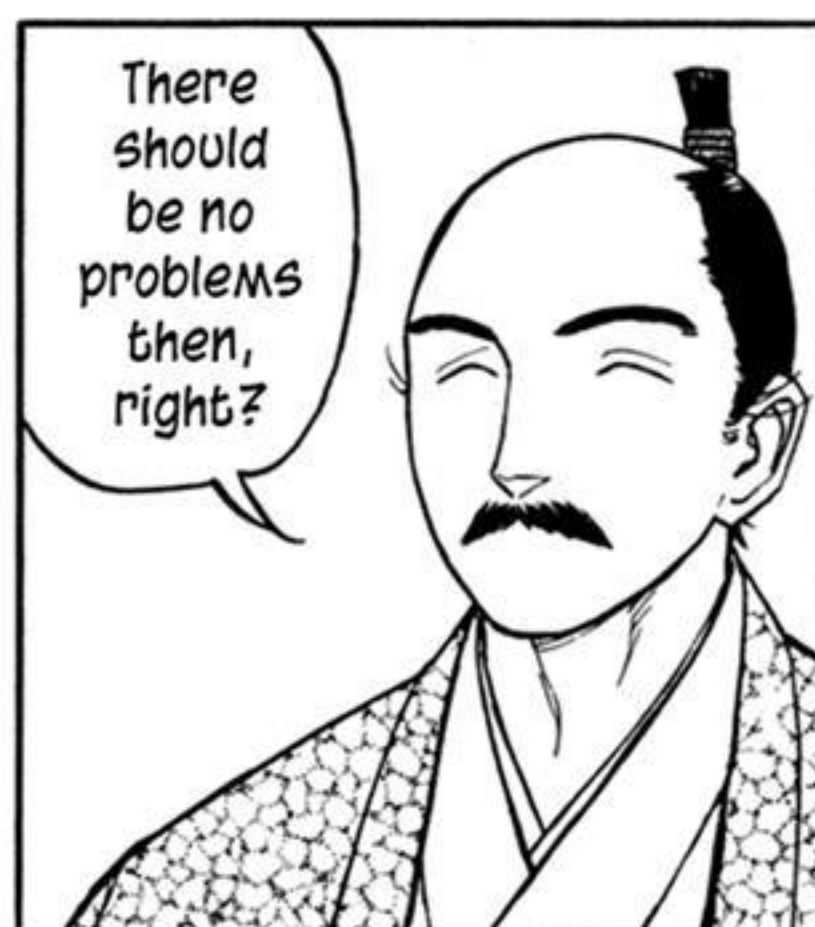


**My
hands will
not move!
My mind
will not
turn!**

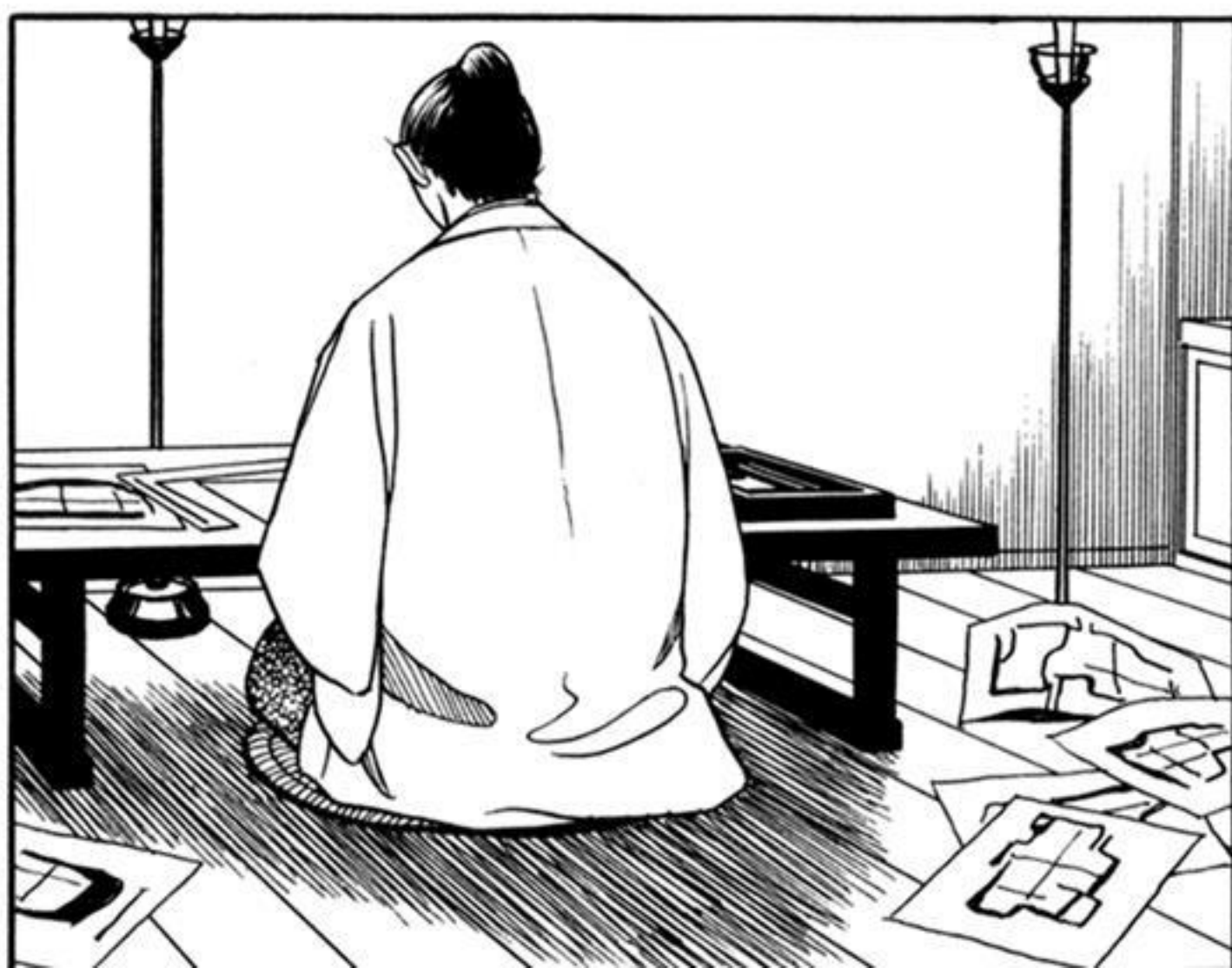
I
cannot!

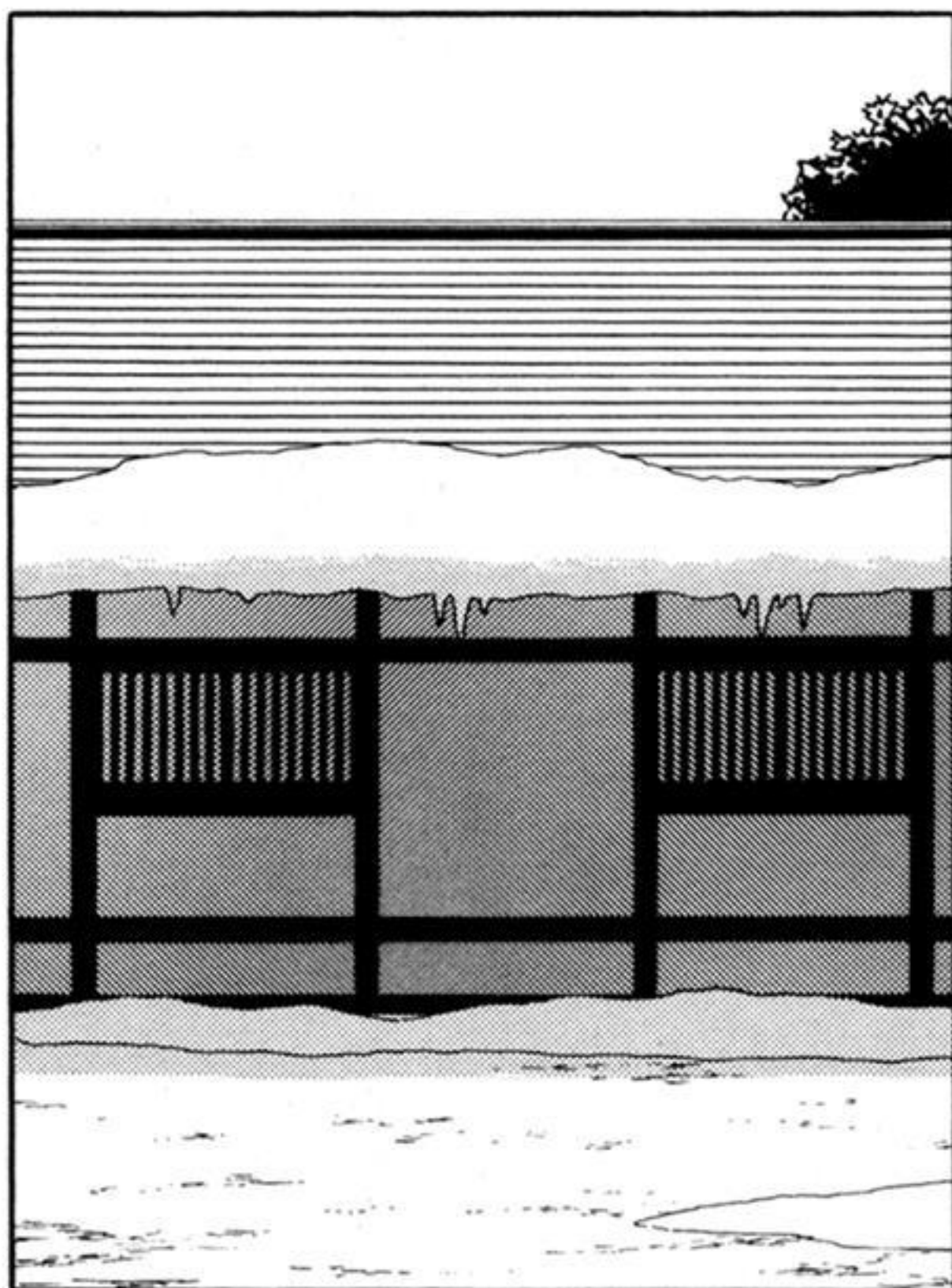
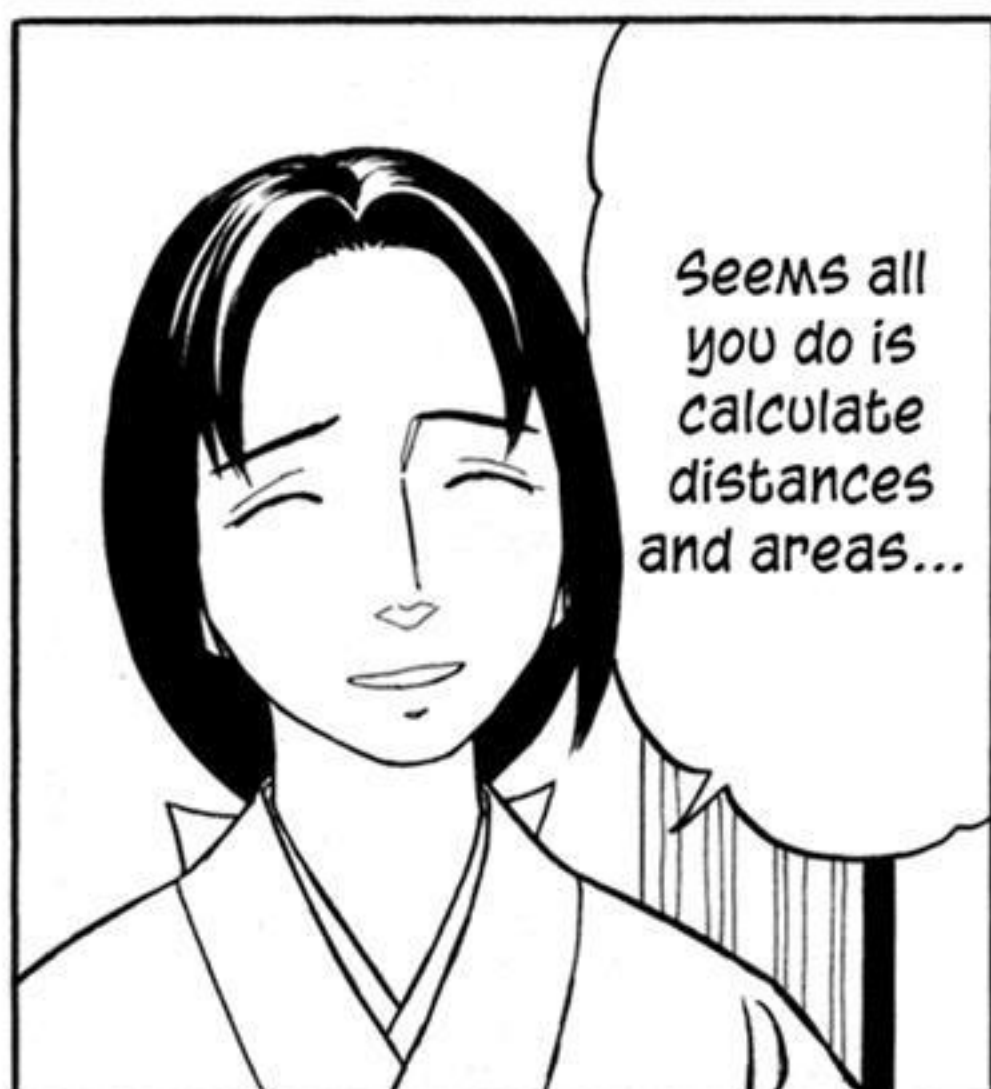


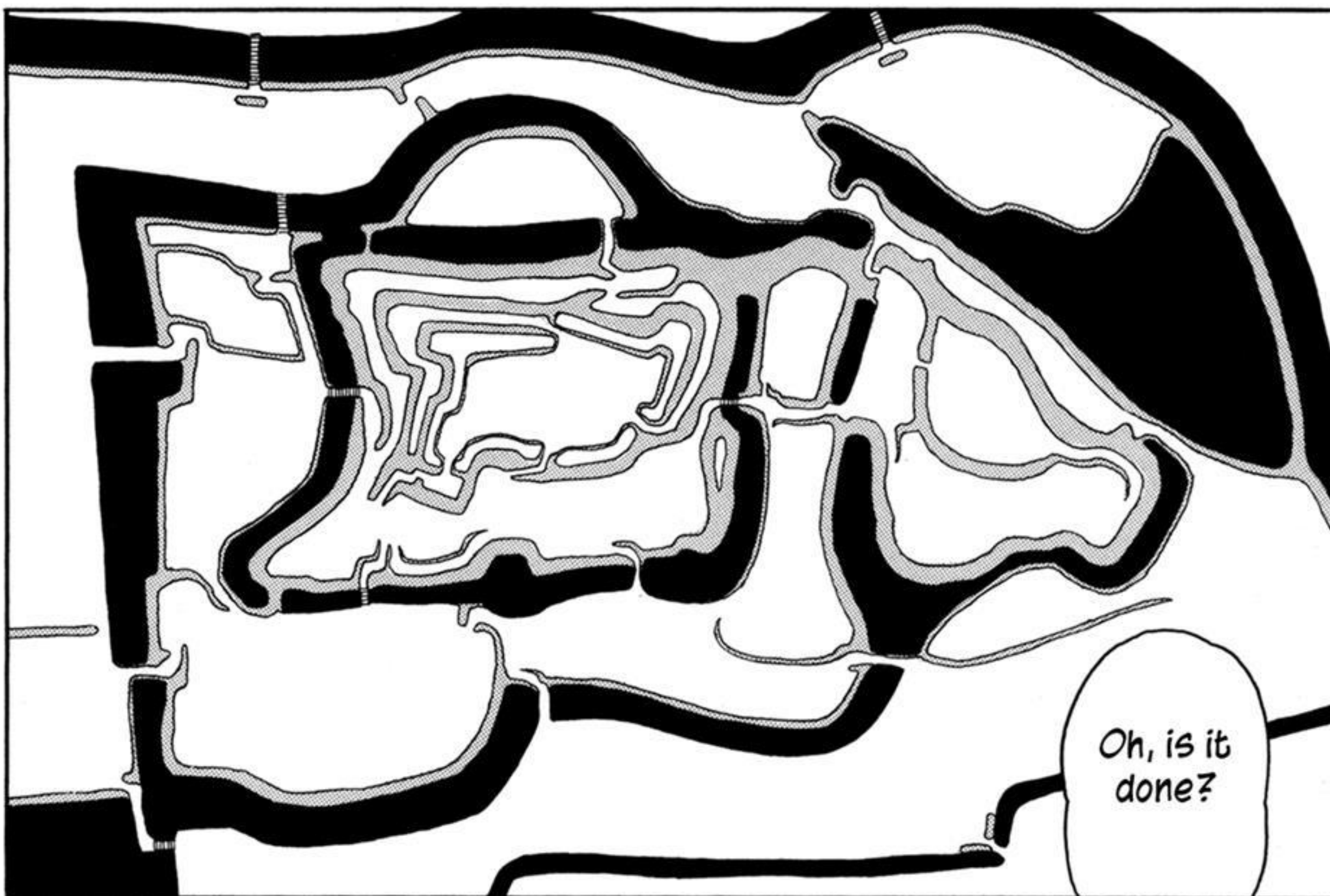
Wha...



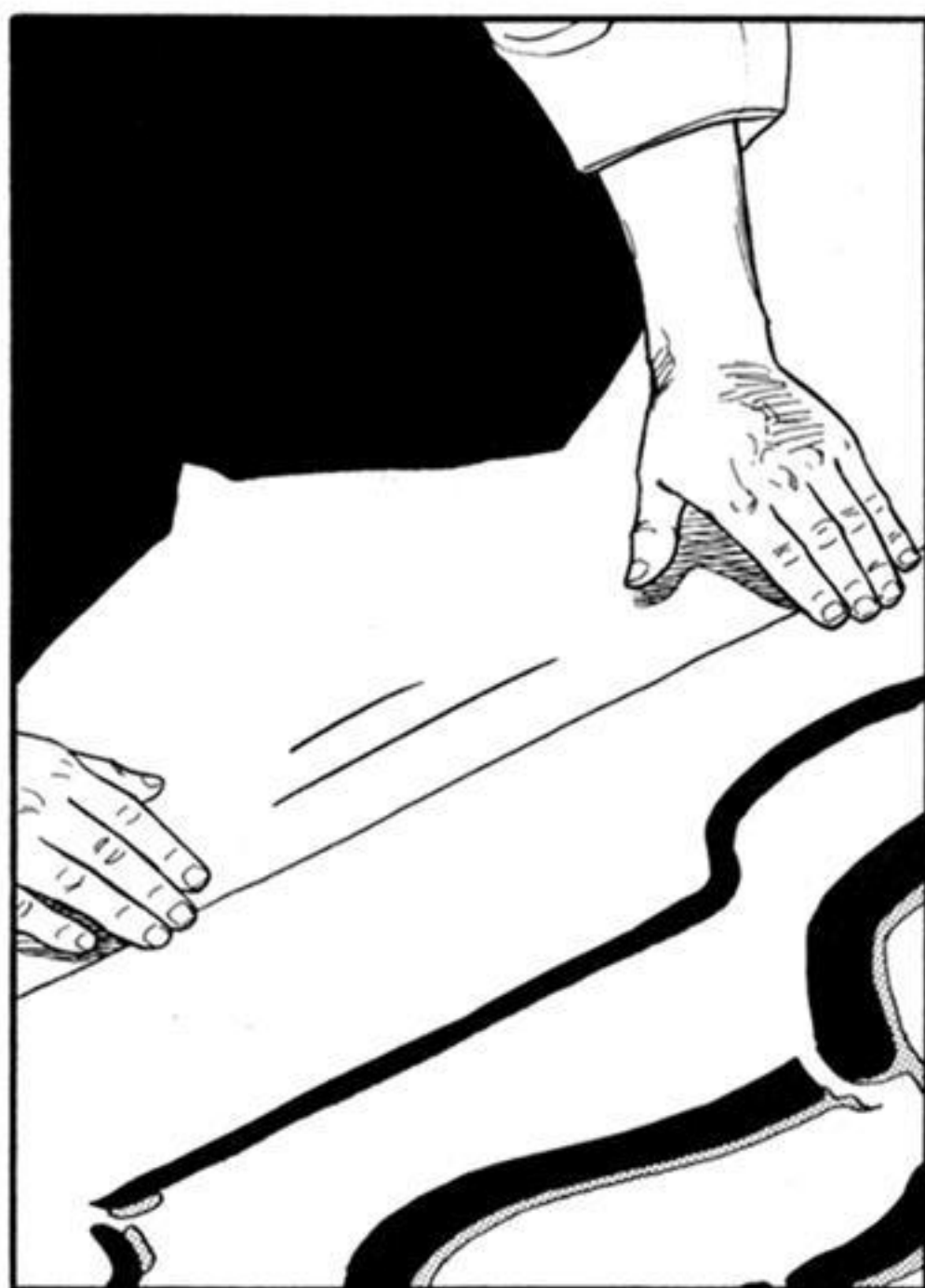
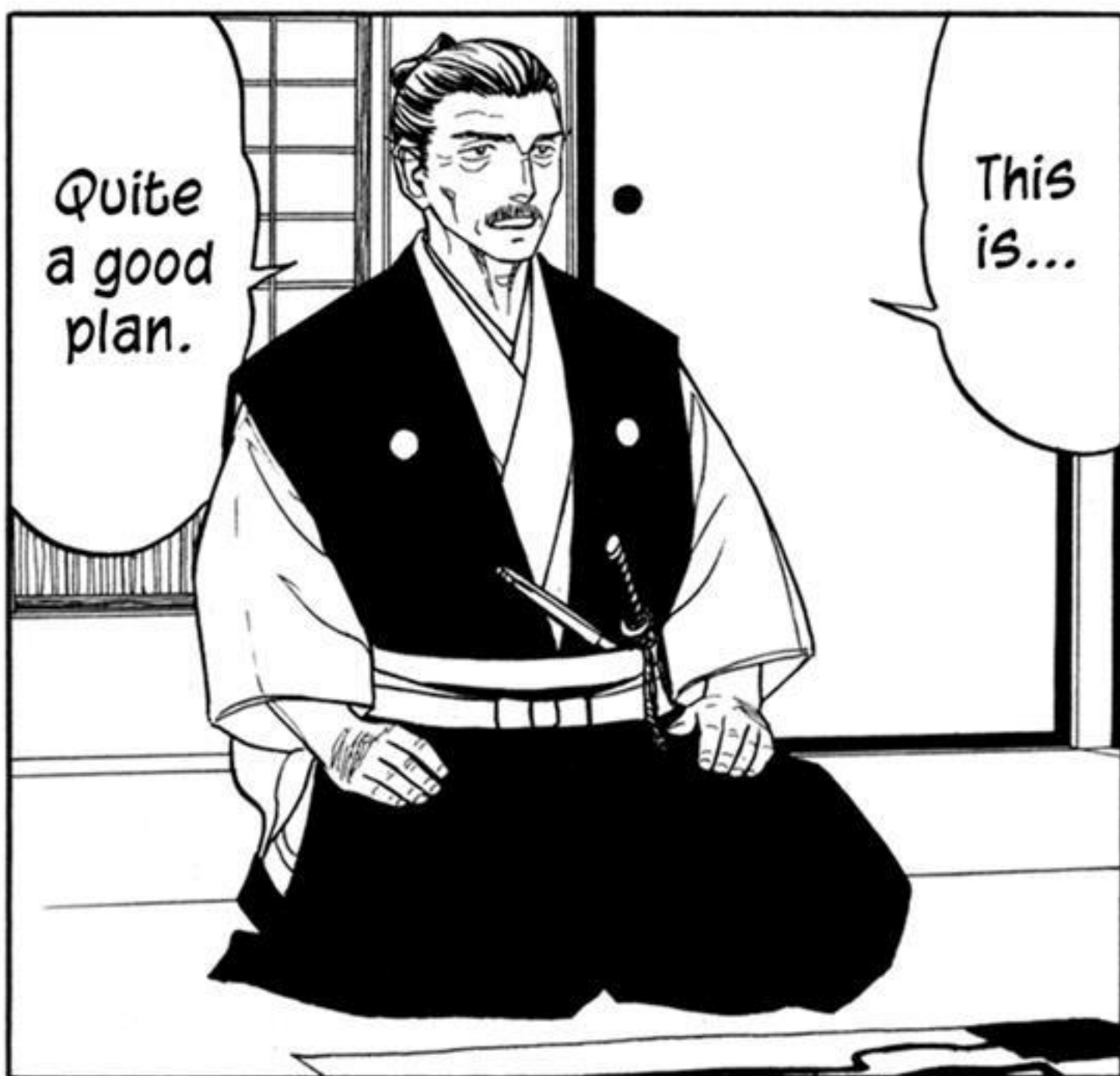








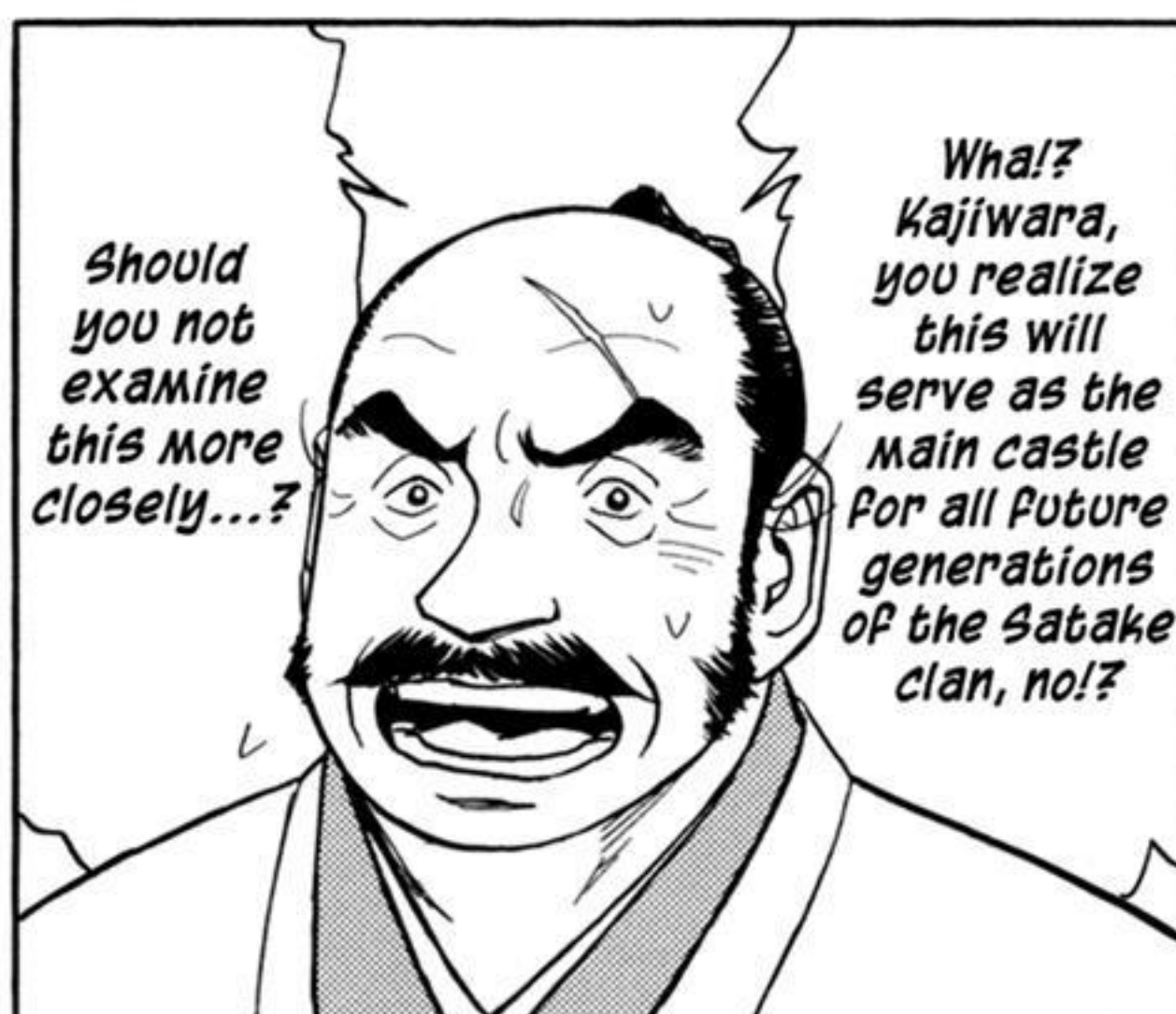






Then allow me to take a look as well...

T...



Should you not examine this more closely...?

Wha!?! Kajiwaru, you realize this will serve as the main castle for all future generations of the Satake clan, no!?!?

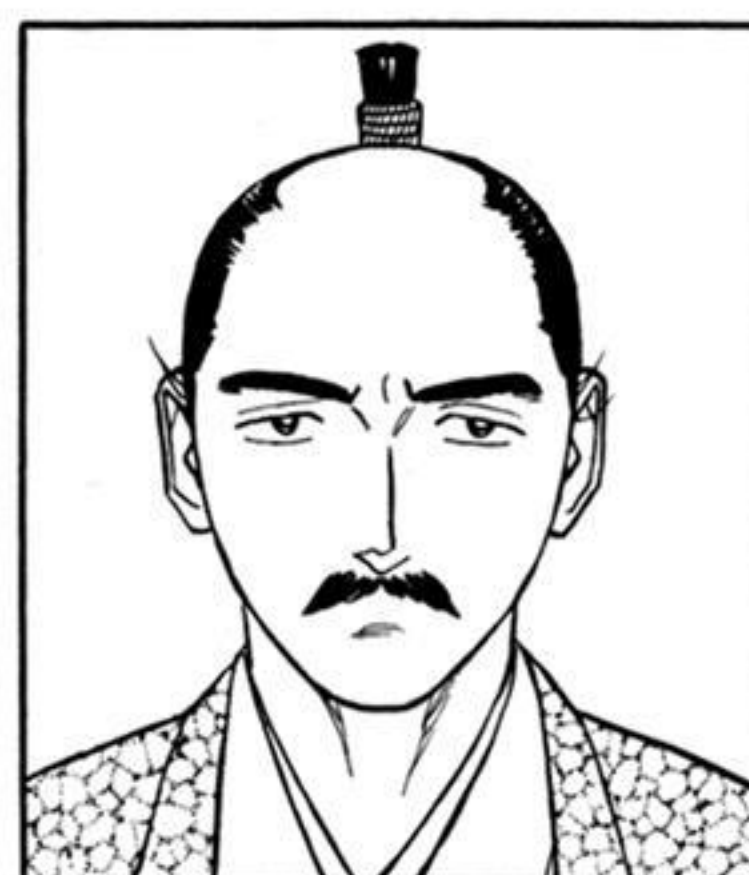


I have.



Just a series of plain-looking sections like rice paddies...

This doesn't seem to be anything special to me...

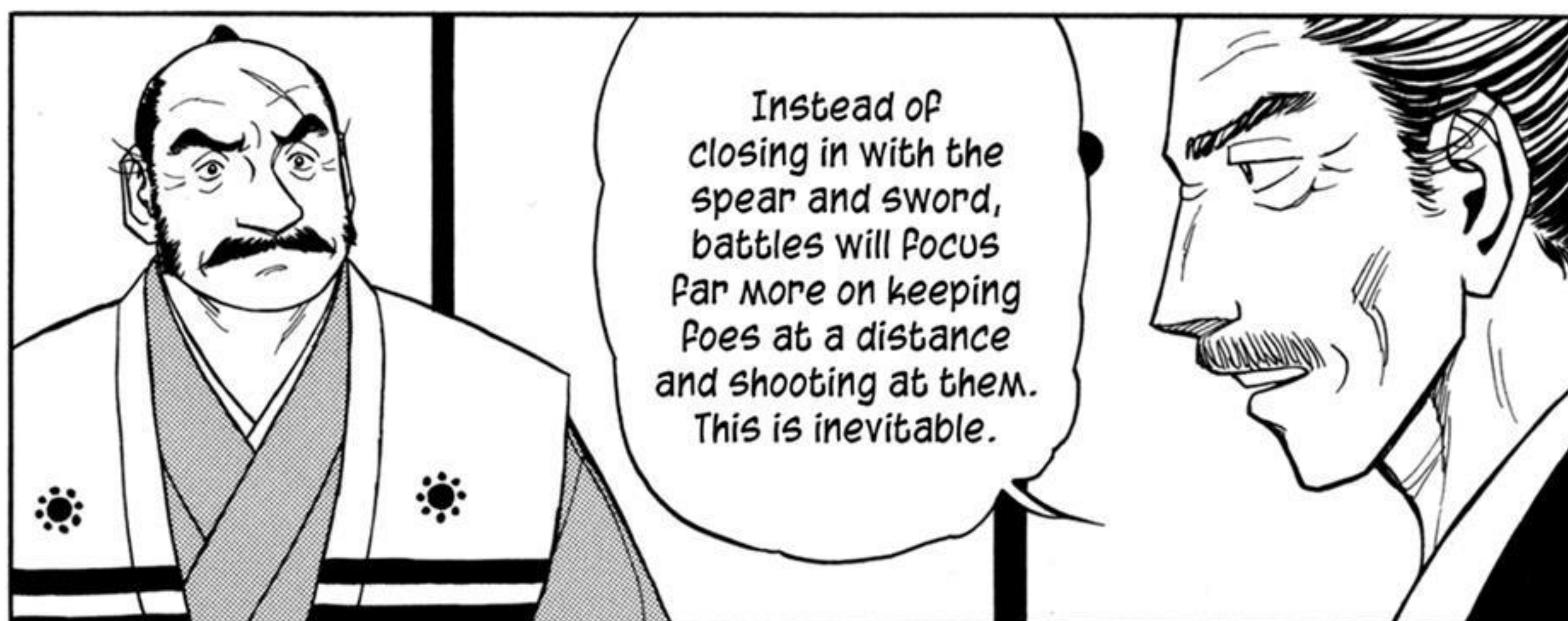


HMM, now that you mention it, you're right...

And there are too few yokoya, wouldn't you agree?

I-Is this castle not lacking enough defensive structures? For instance, a section right behind the entrance where if enemies were to storm the gates, they can be fired upon from all sides?

*Yokoya: Sections of the castle wall from which arrows and guns can be fired to flank enemies attempting to scale or breach the walls.

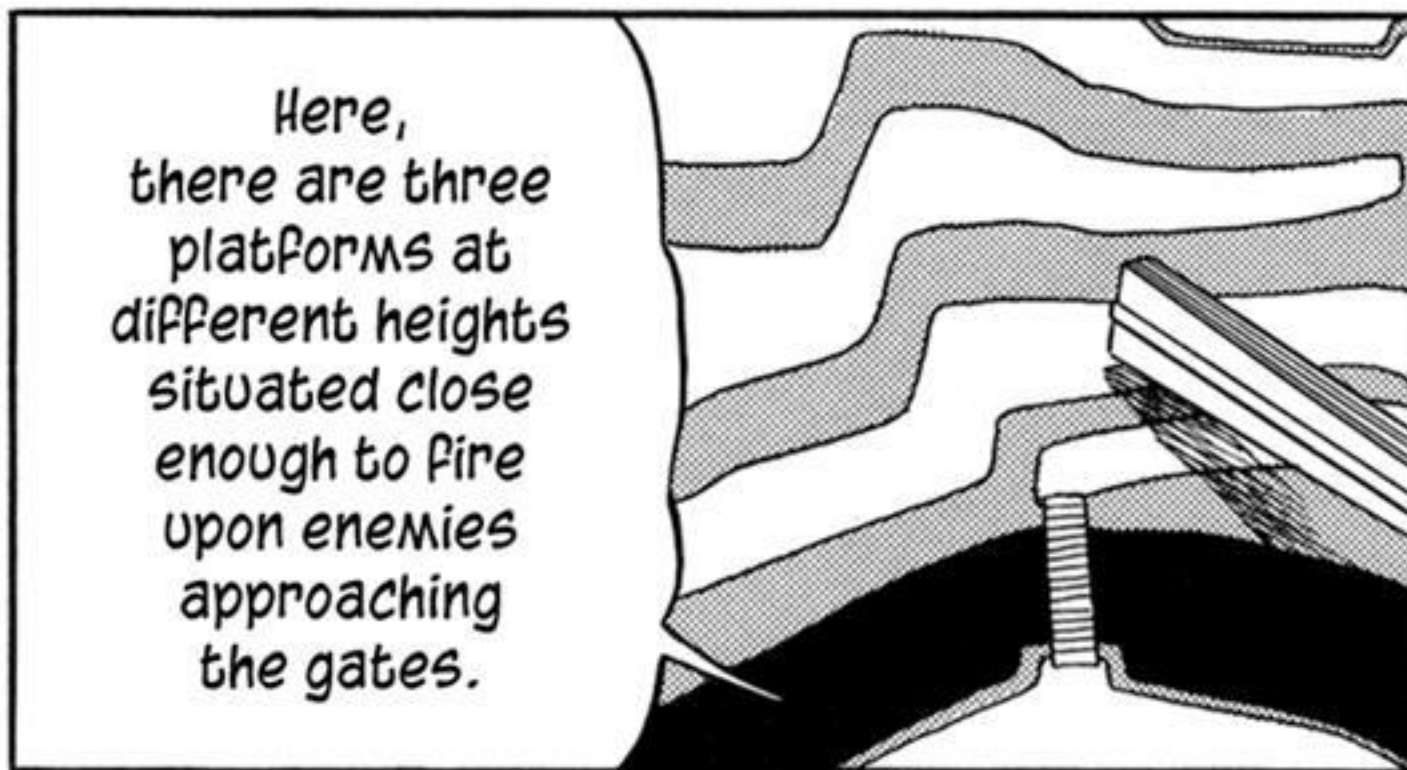




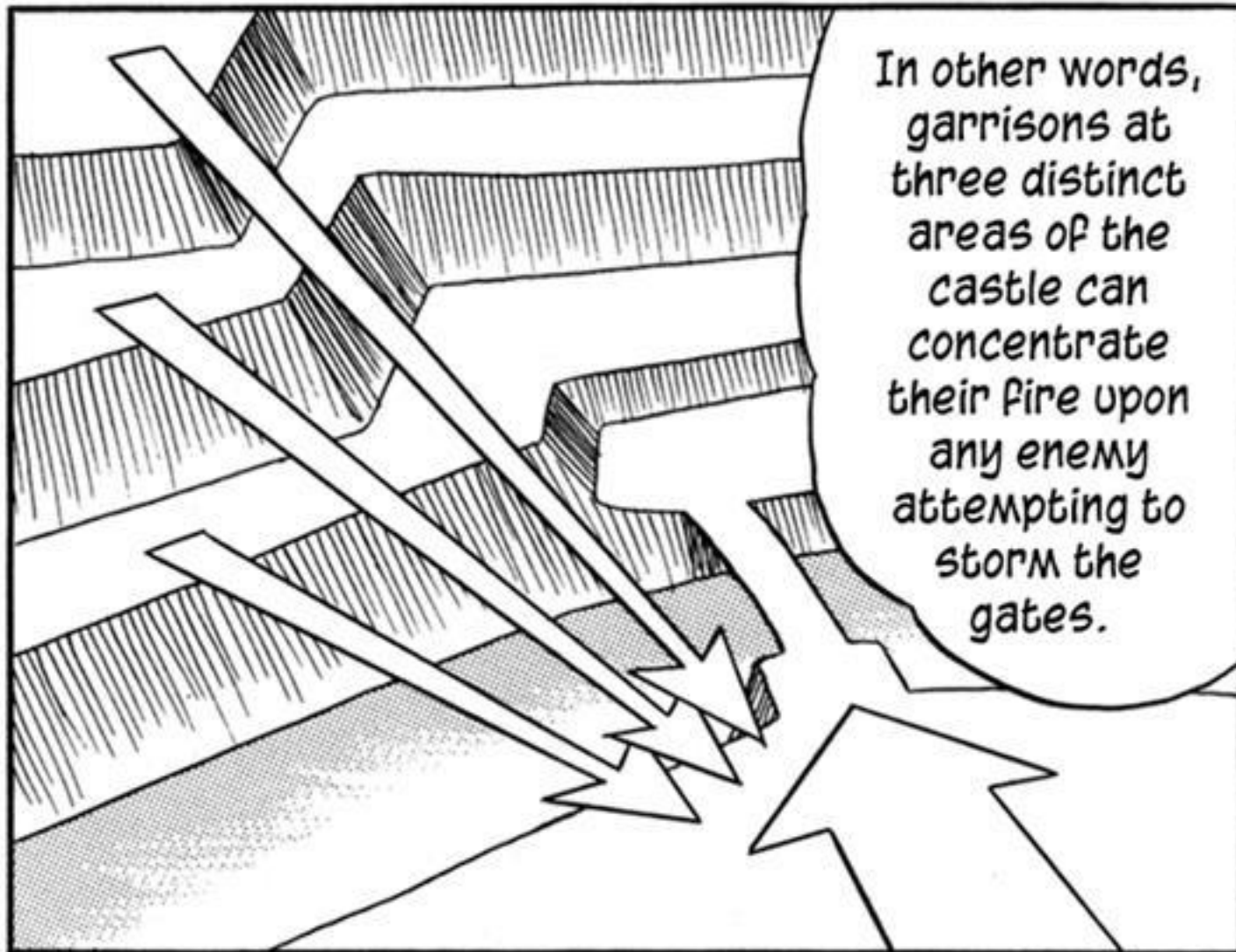
Thus,
the castle
needs no
substantial
defenses
for its inner
grounds.



In other words,
the battle is
already lost if the
enemies are close
enough to fight
hand-to-hand.



Here,
there are three
platforms at
different heights
situated close
enough to fire
upon enemies
approaching
the gates.



In other words,
garrisons at
three distinct
areas of the
castle can
concentrate
their fire upon
any enemy
attempting to
storm the
gates.

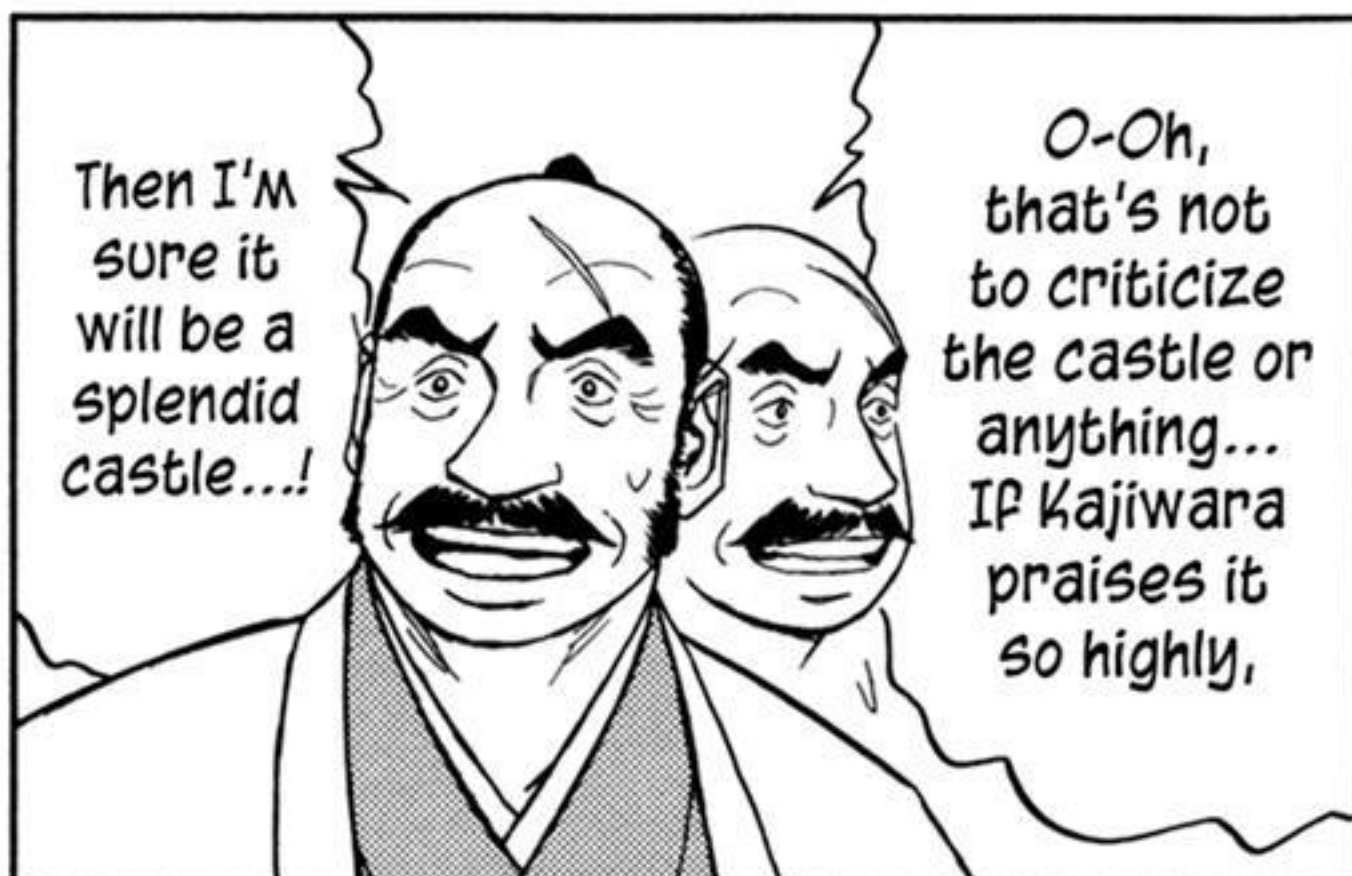
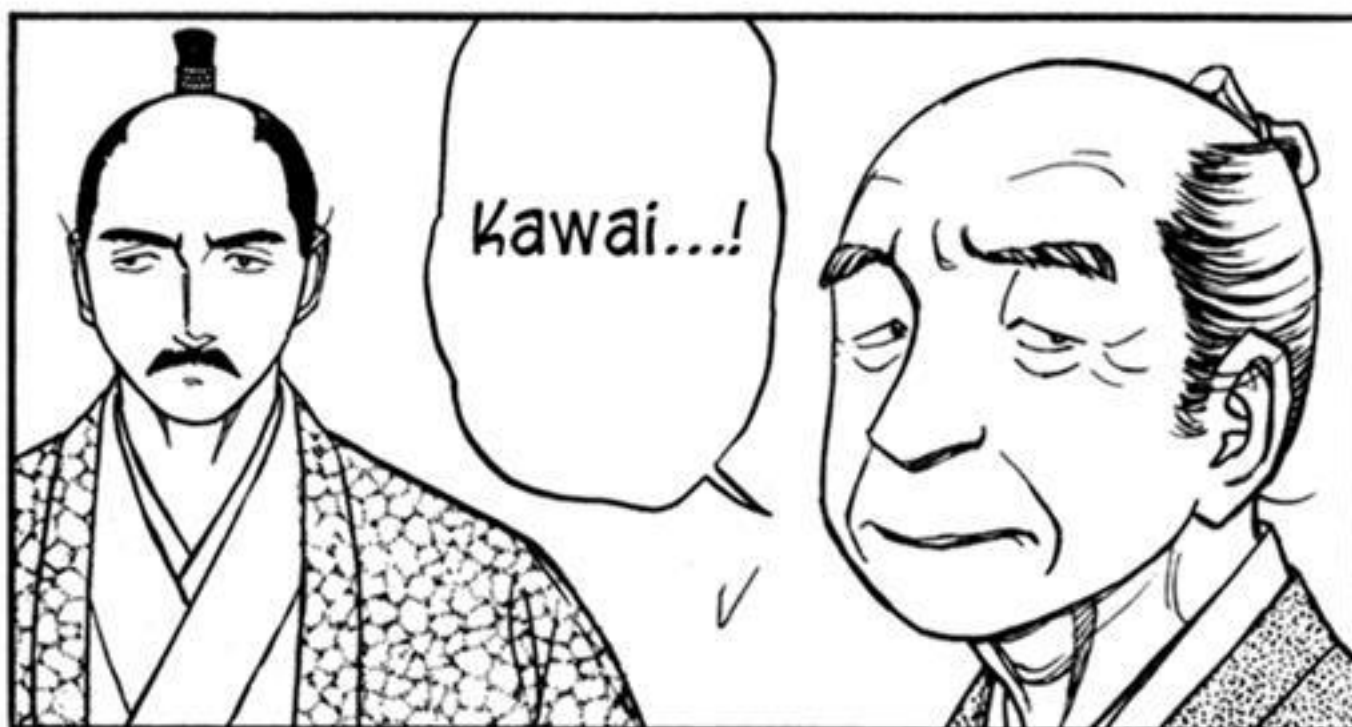
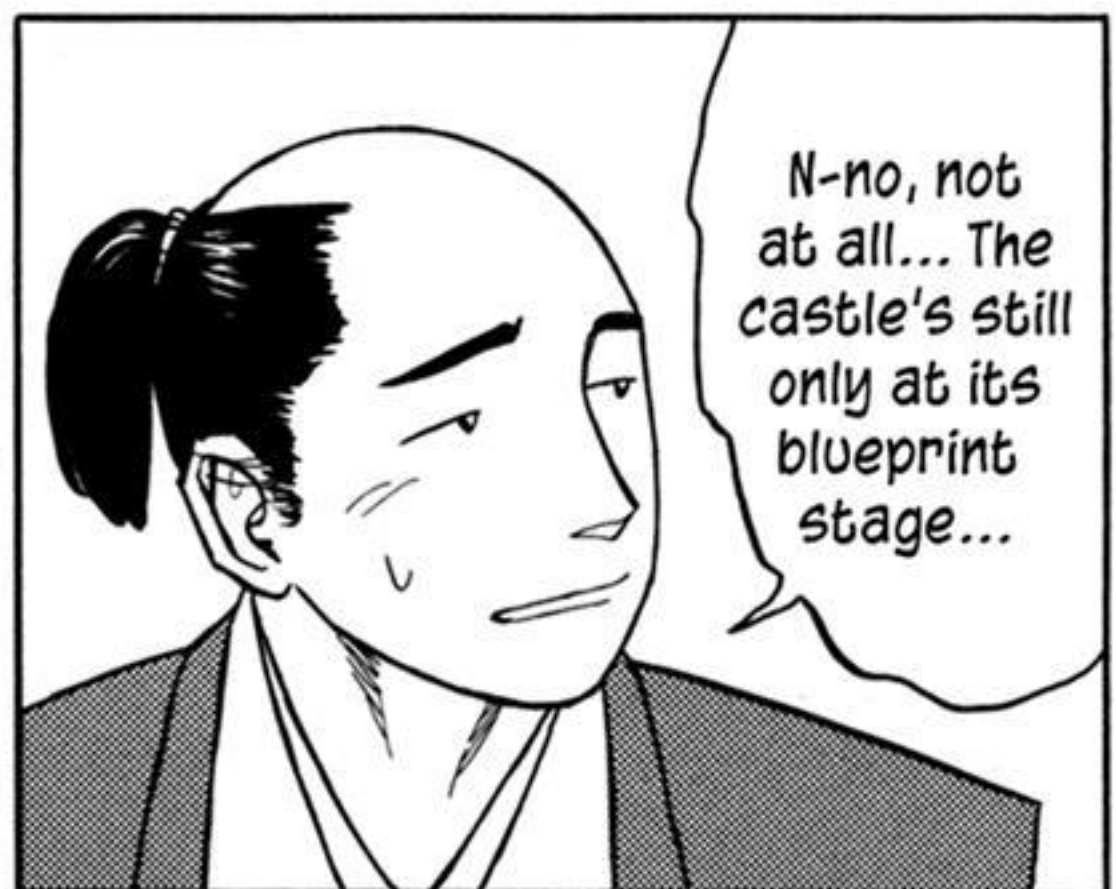
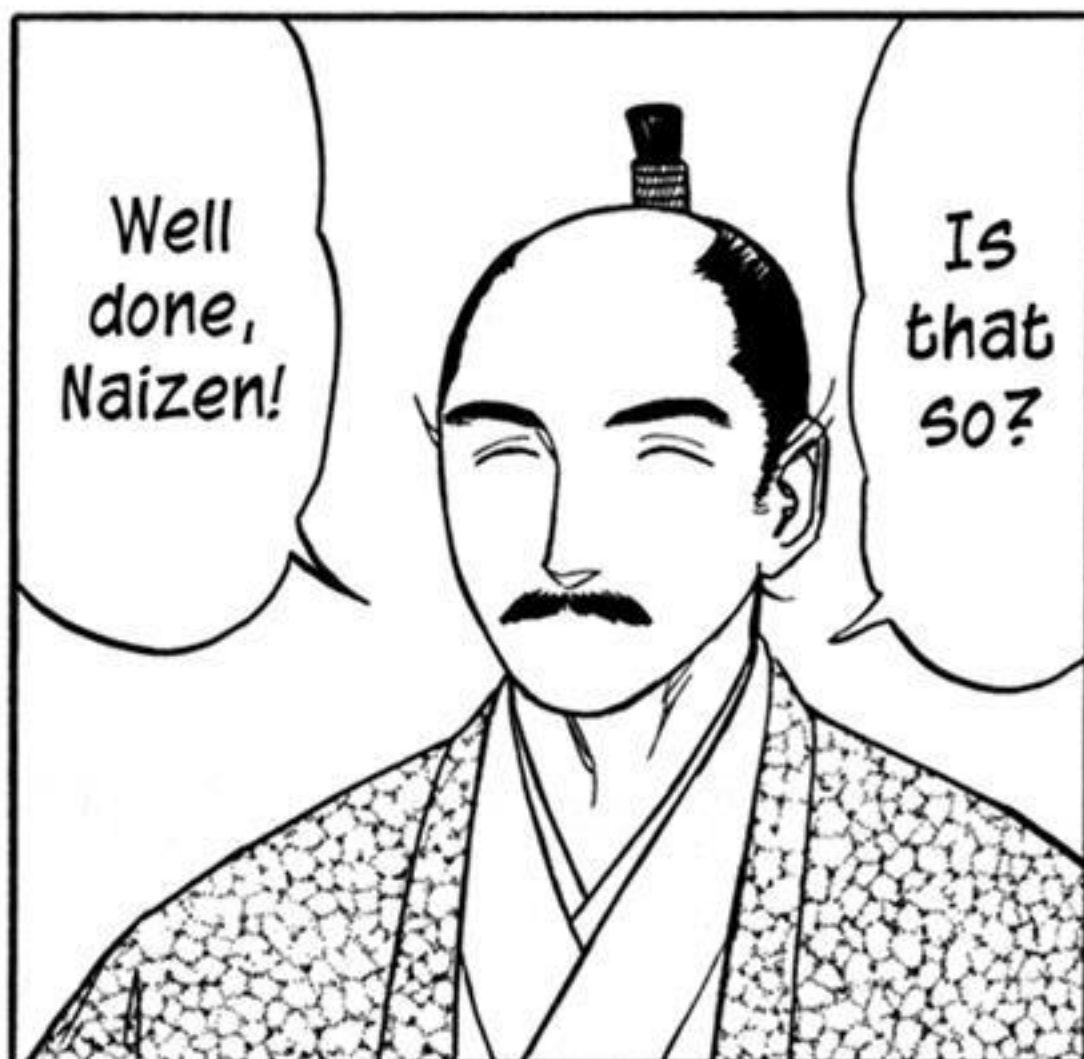


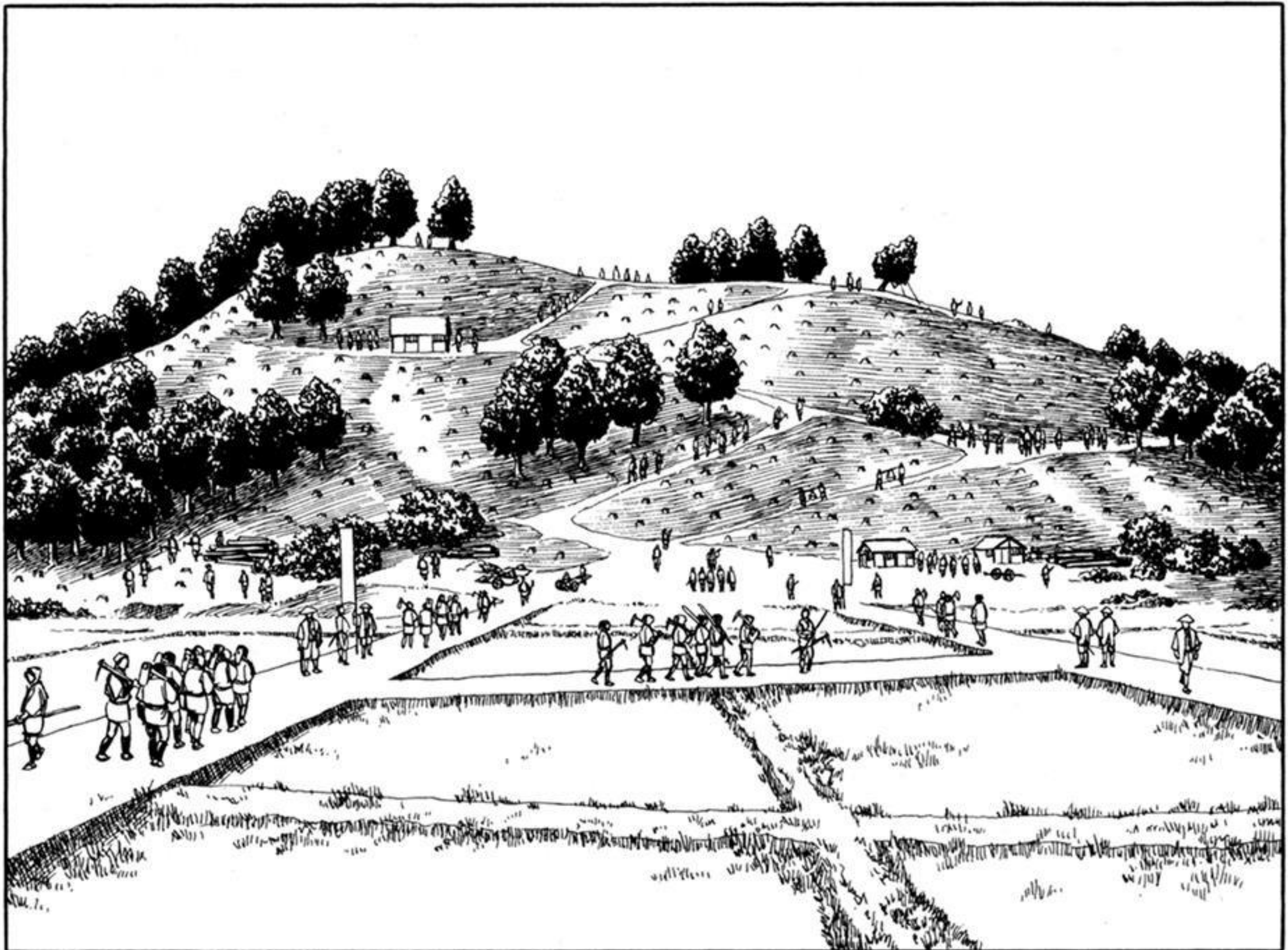
At a
glance,
Naizen's
plans seem
quite
ordinary,
but take a
closer look
at the
section
near the
front
gates...



Truly,
a castle
fit for
the coming
new age.

This
is a defensive
tactic based
not on countering
the enemy with
the blade, but by
criss-crossing
as many lines
of gunfire from
all angles as
possible.







What are you talking of? You've stepped in to take care of everything yourself.



Thanks to your guidance, everything is progressing smoothly.



Hmph...



HM?
Is that...
our lord?

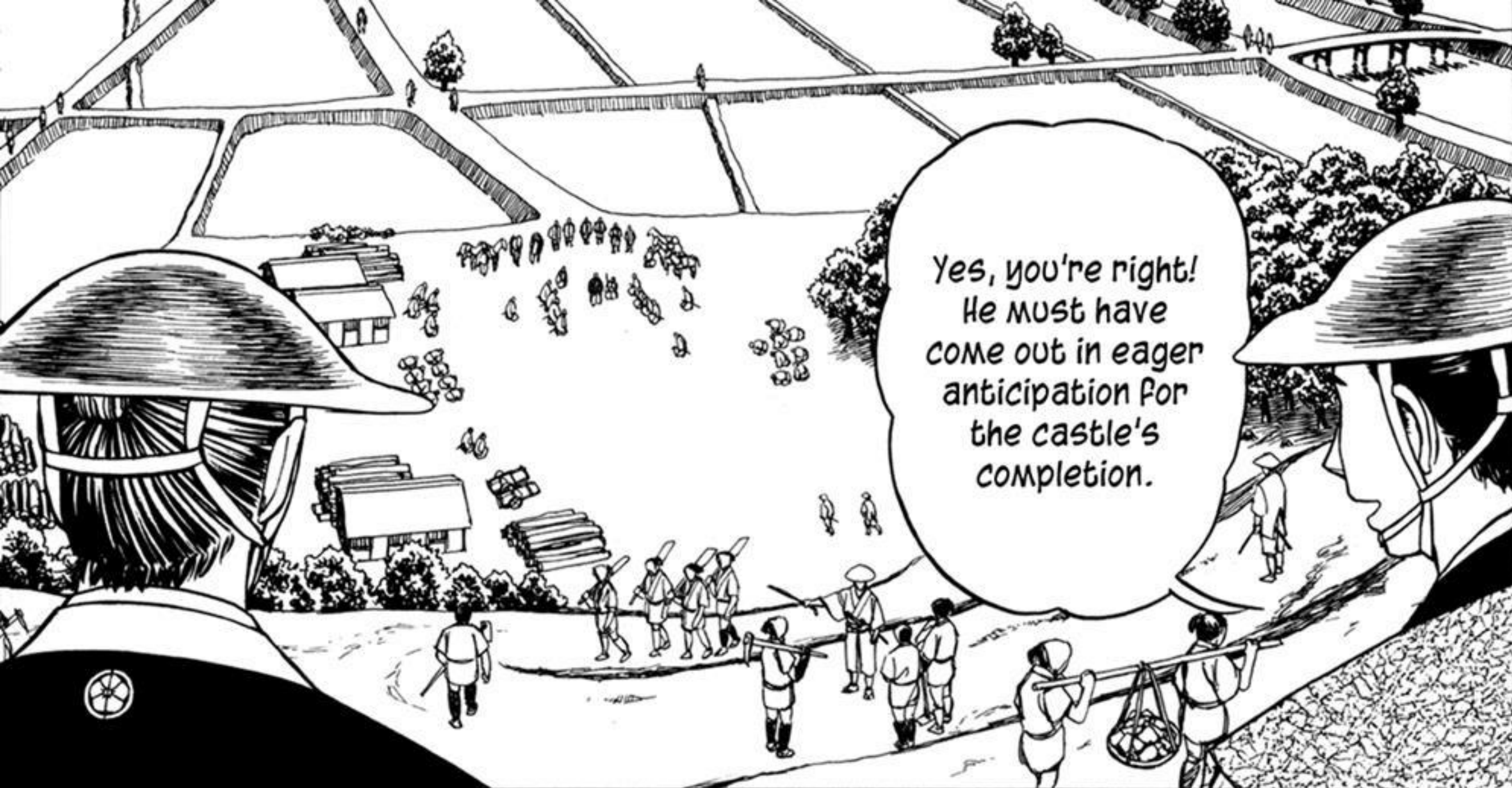


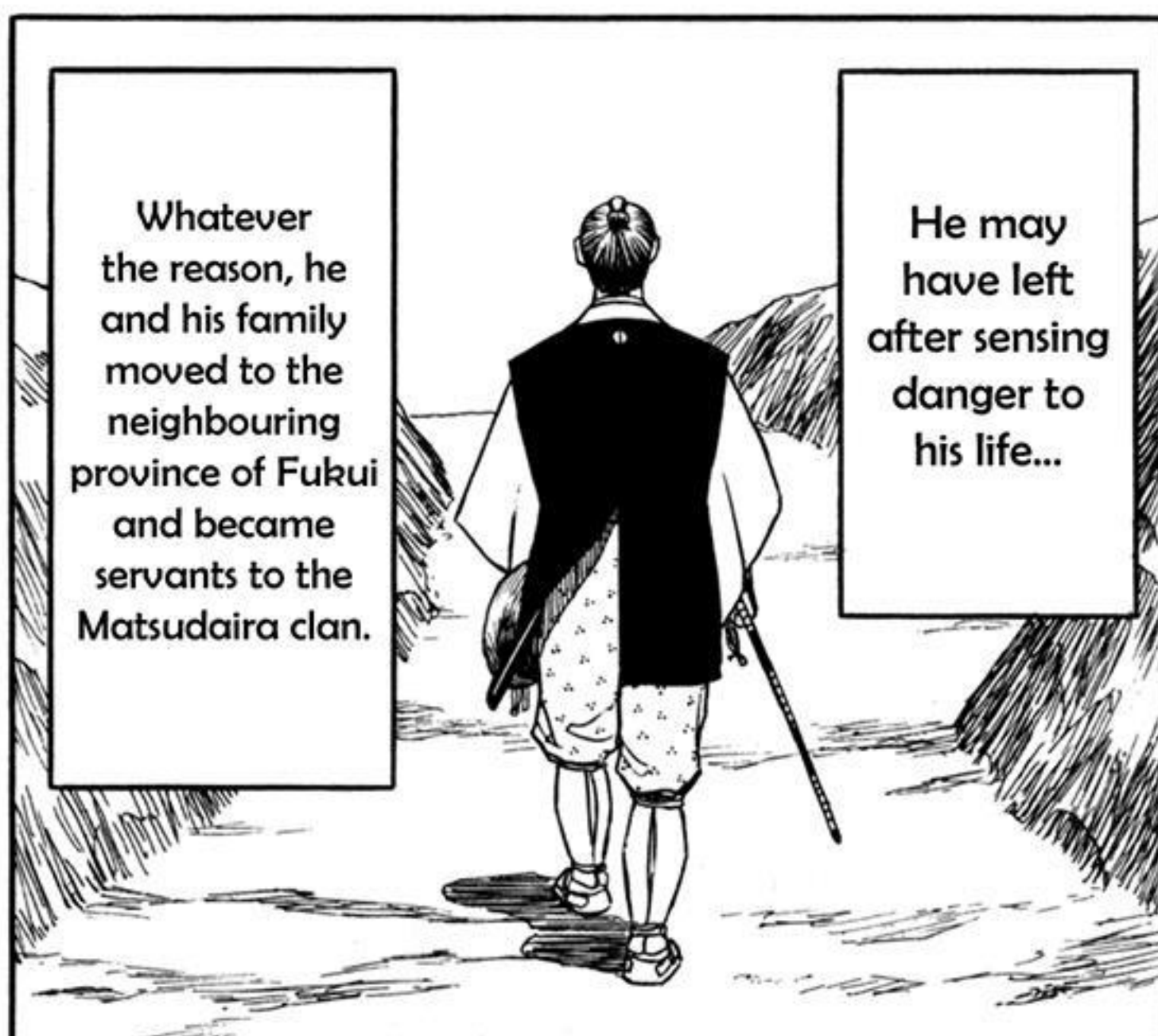
I still
have much
to learn
from you.



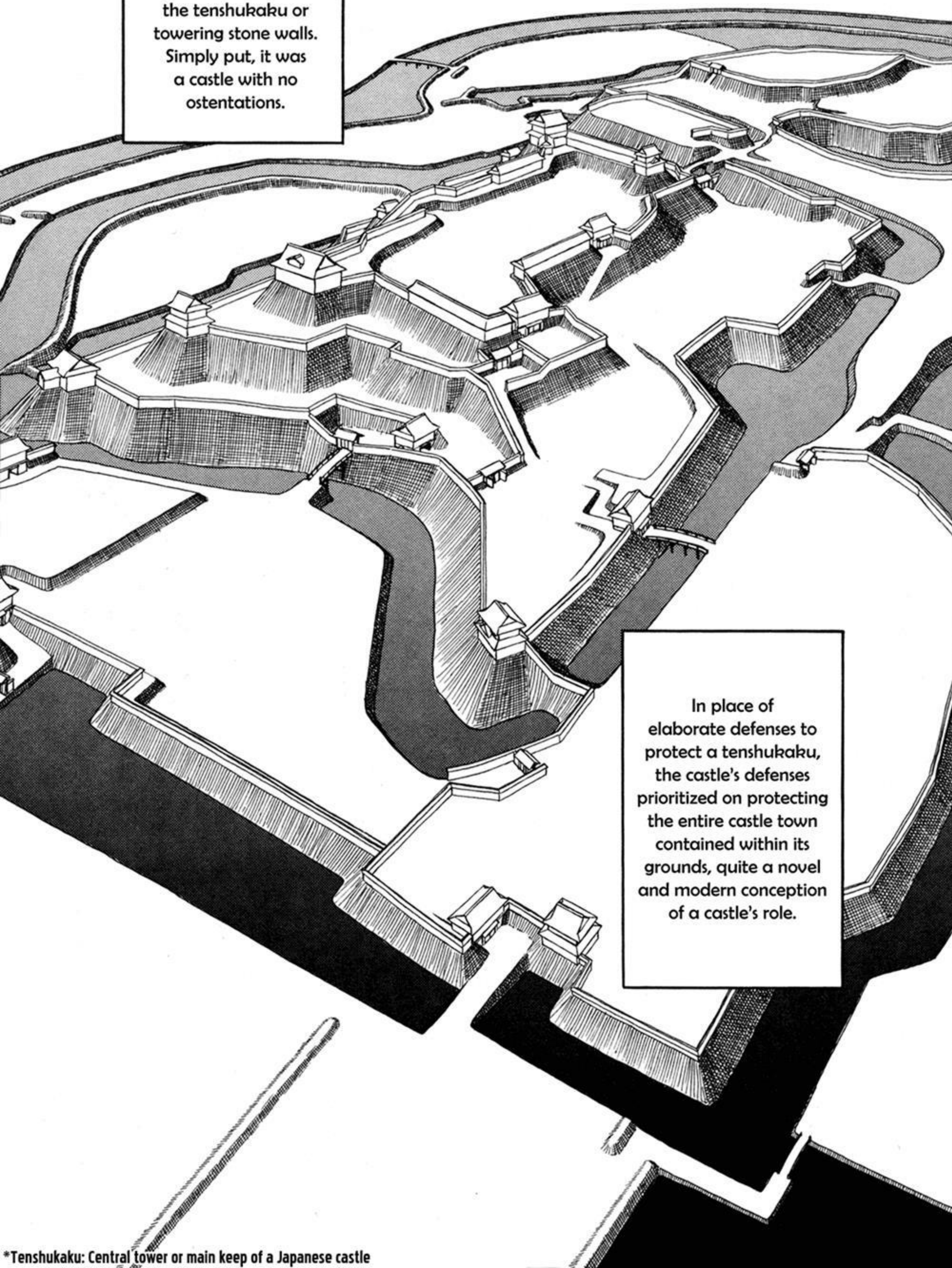
There is no
place for me
anymore.

Surely
you jest.



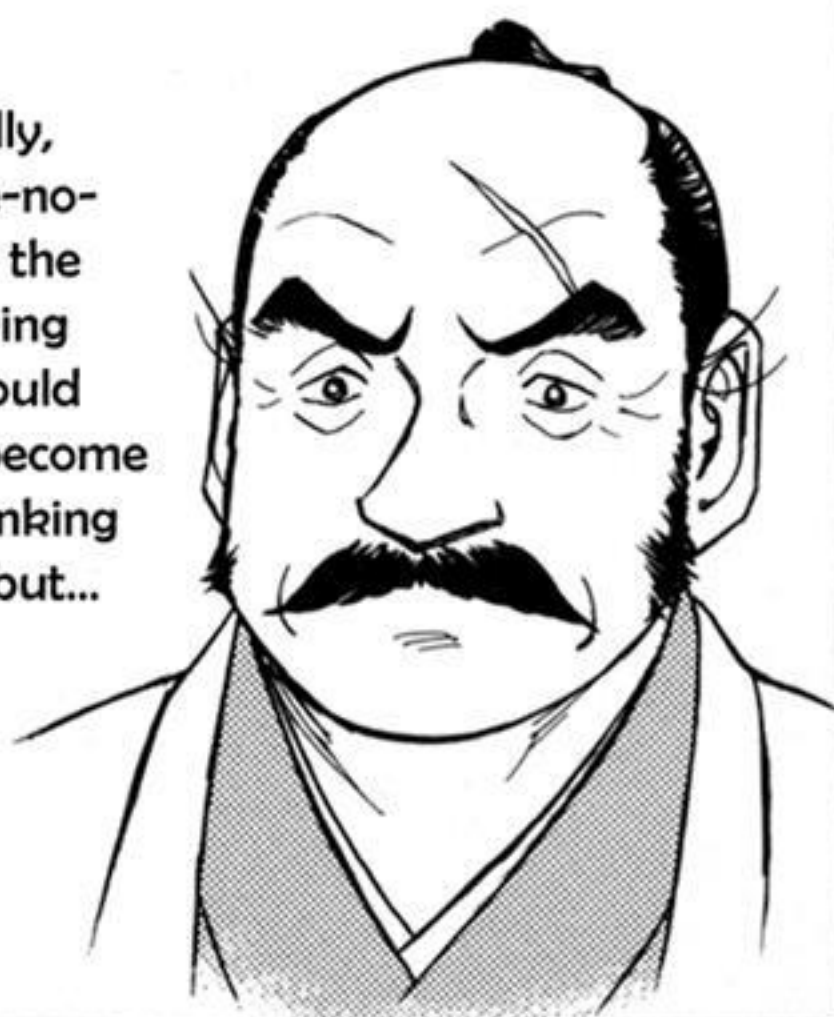


At last, the construction of the Kubota castle came to completion. The finished castle lacked the usual features of a medieval Japanese castle such as the tenshukaku or towering stone walls. Simply put, it was a castle with no ostentations.

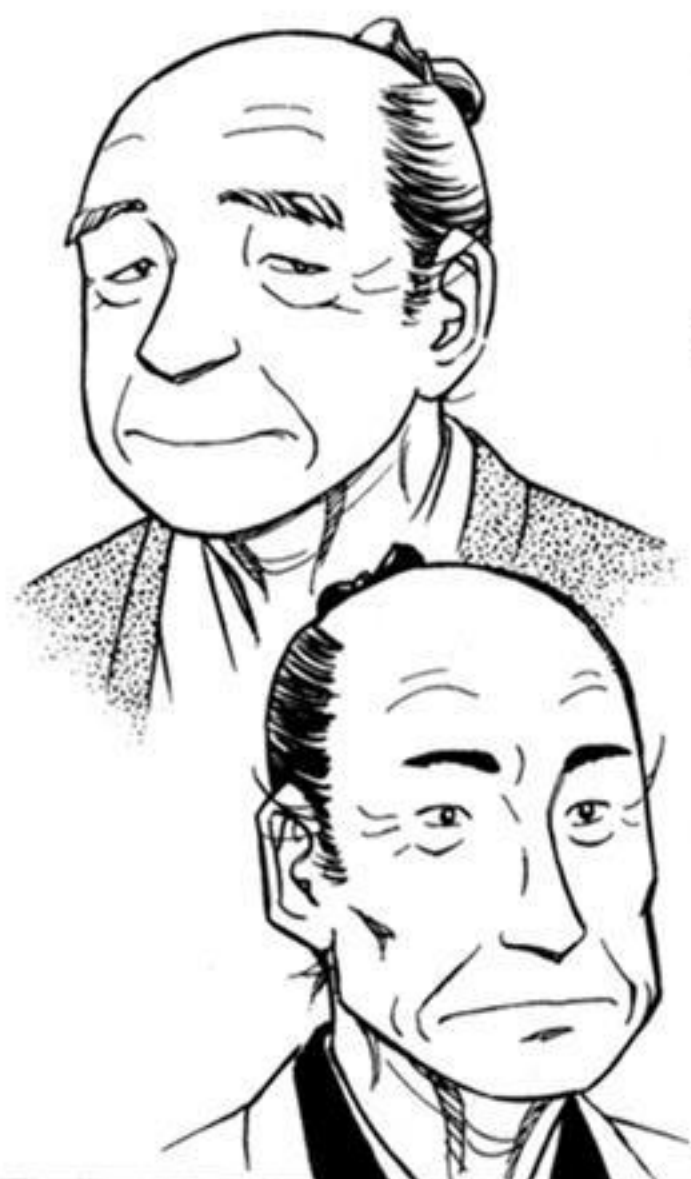


In place of elaborate defenses to protect a tenshukaku, the castle's defenses prioritized on protecting the entire castle town contained within its grounds, quite a novel and modern conception of a castle's role.

Normally,
Kawai Ise-no-
Kami, as the
sole serving
Karō, should
have now become
highest-ranking
retainer, but...



In that eighth
year of Keichō (1603),
the Karō Wada
Awa-no-Kami and
Onuki Ōkuranojō
retired from their
posts due to their
worsening health
from old age.



*Shibue
Naizen
will be
promoted
to Karō!?*

What!?



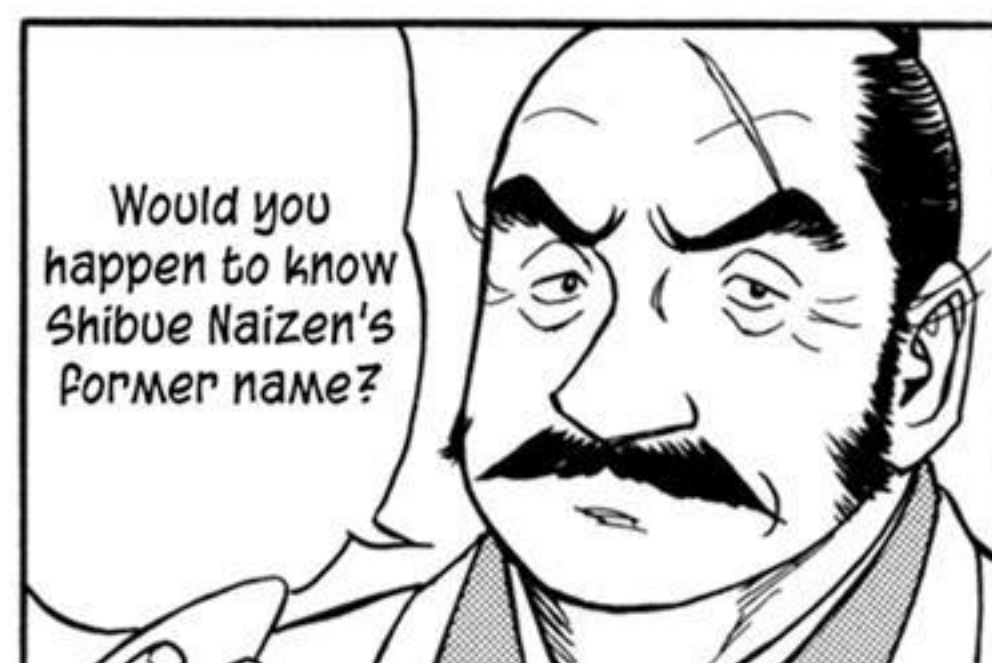
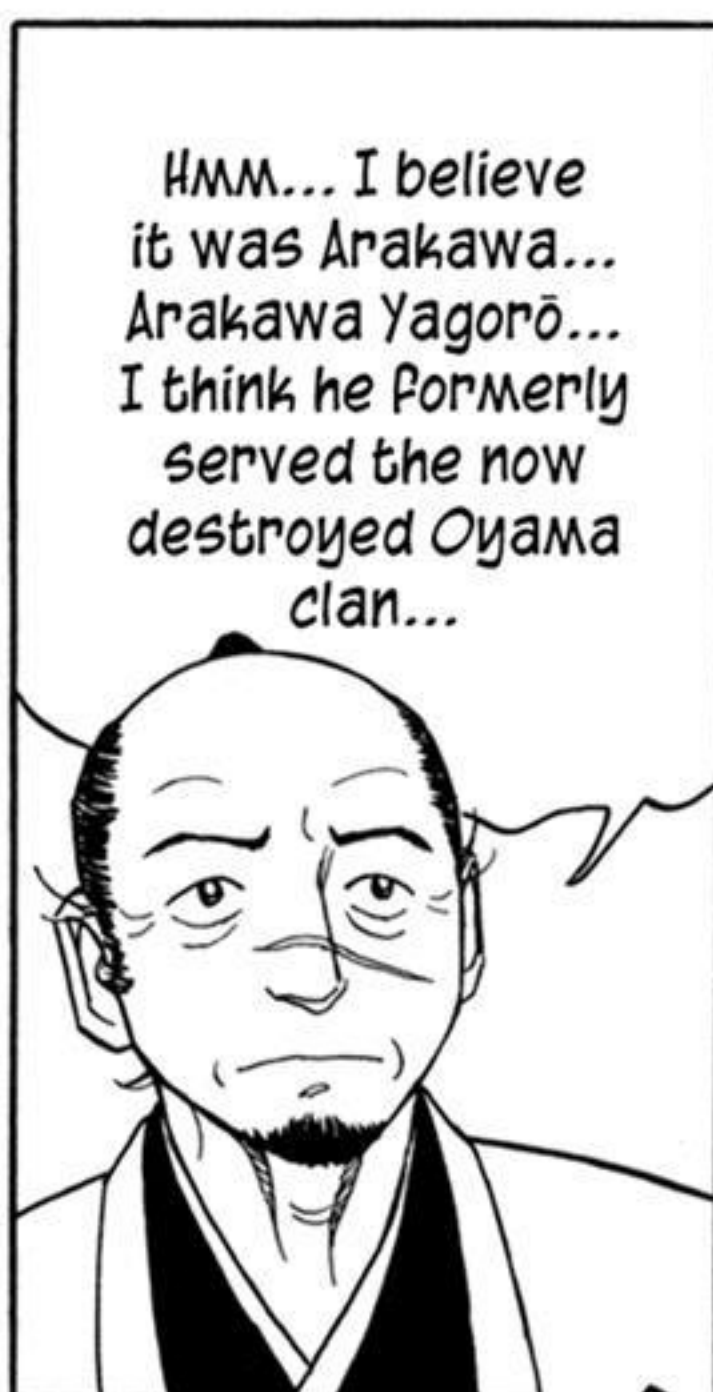
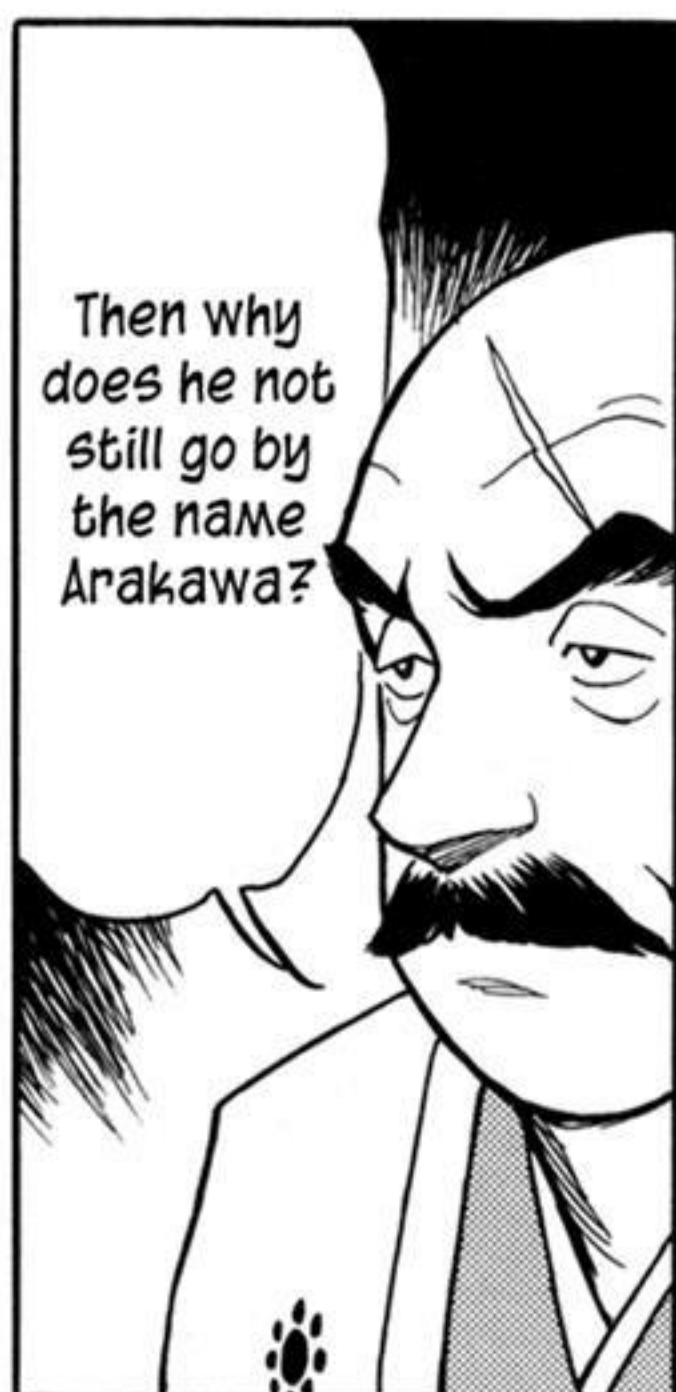
*Will be the
same rank
as me!?*



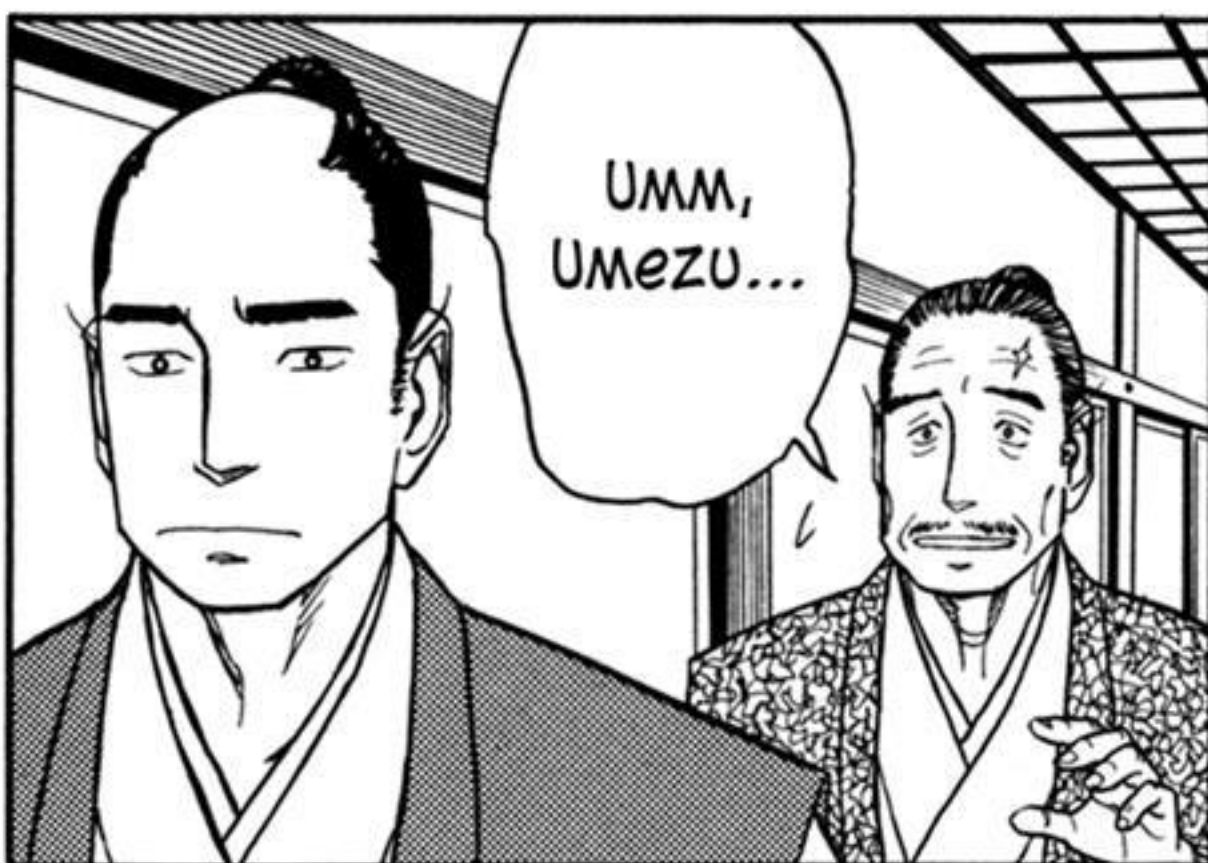
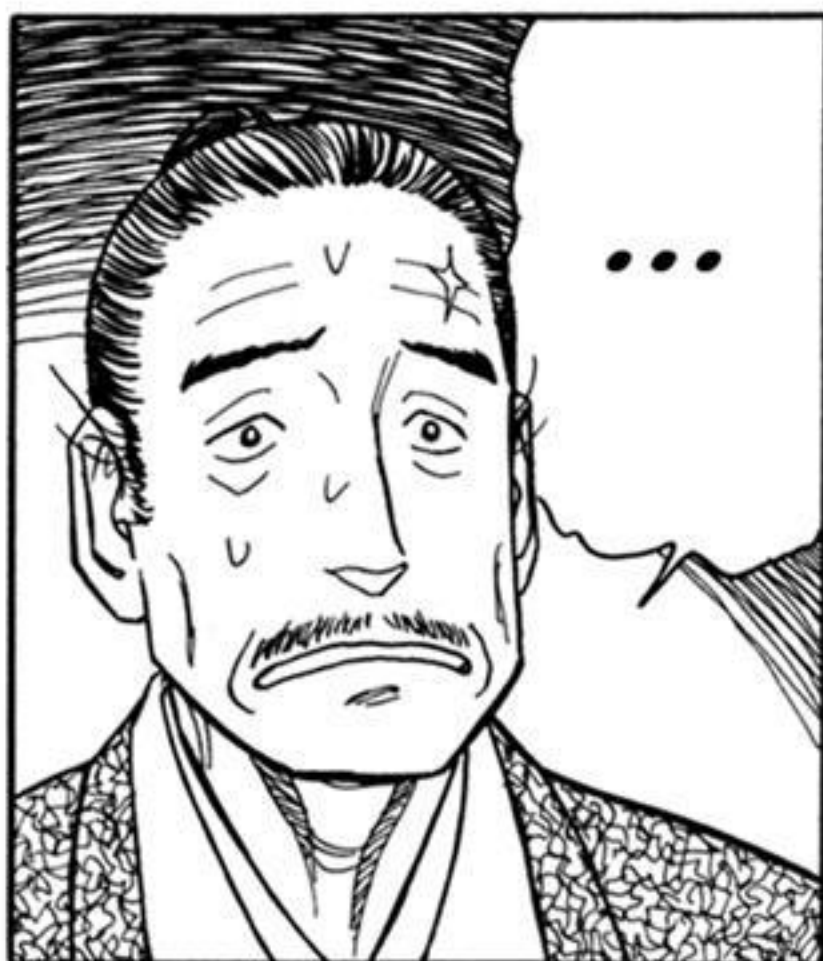
*That
young up-
start...*

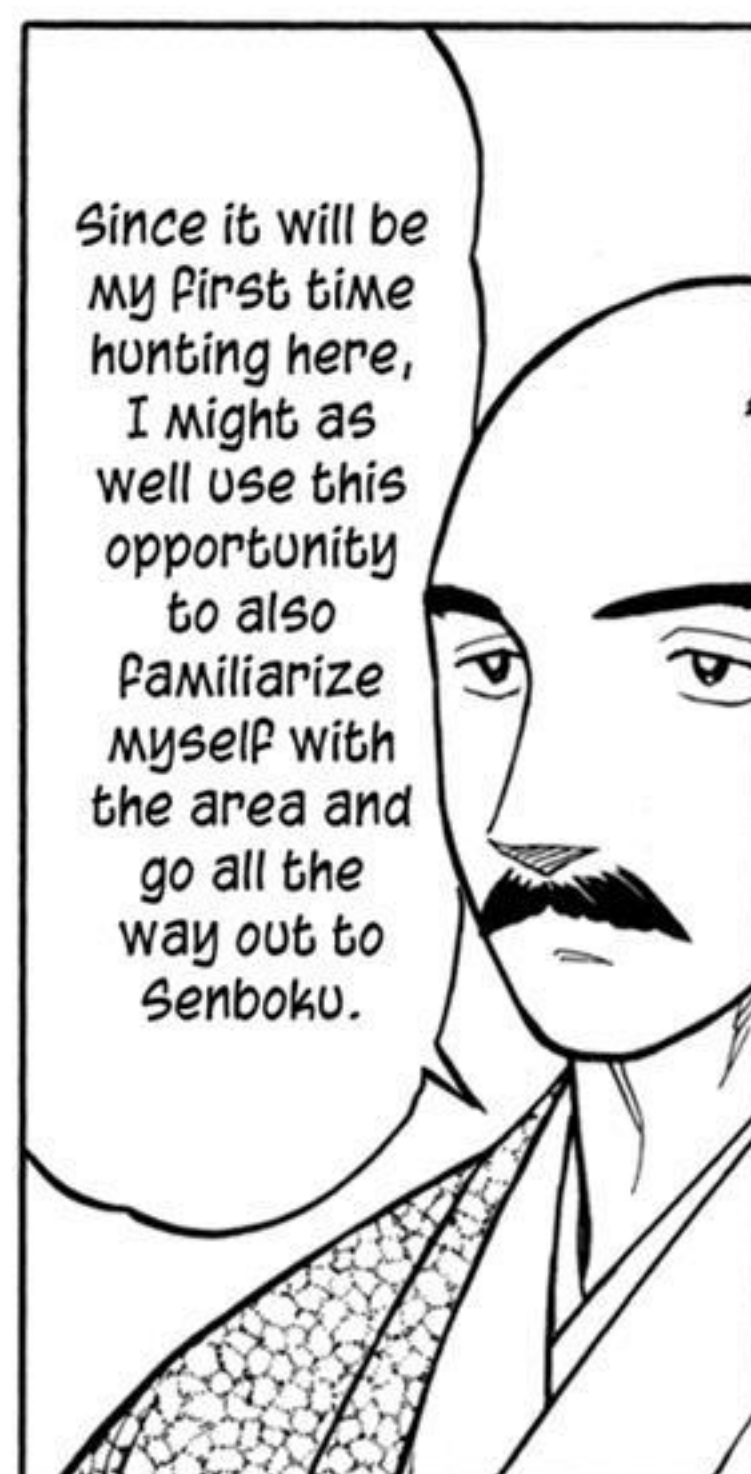
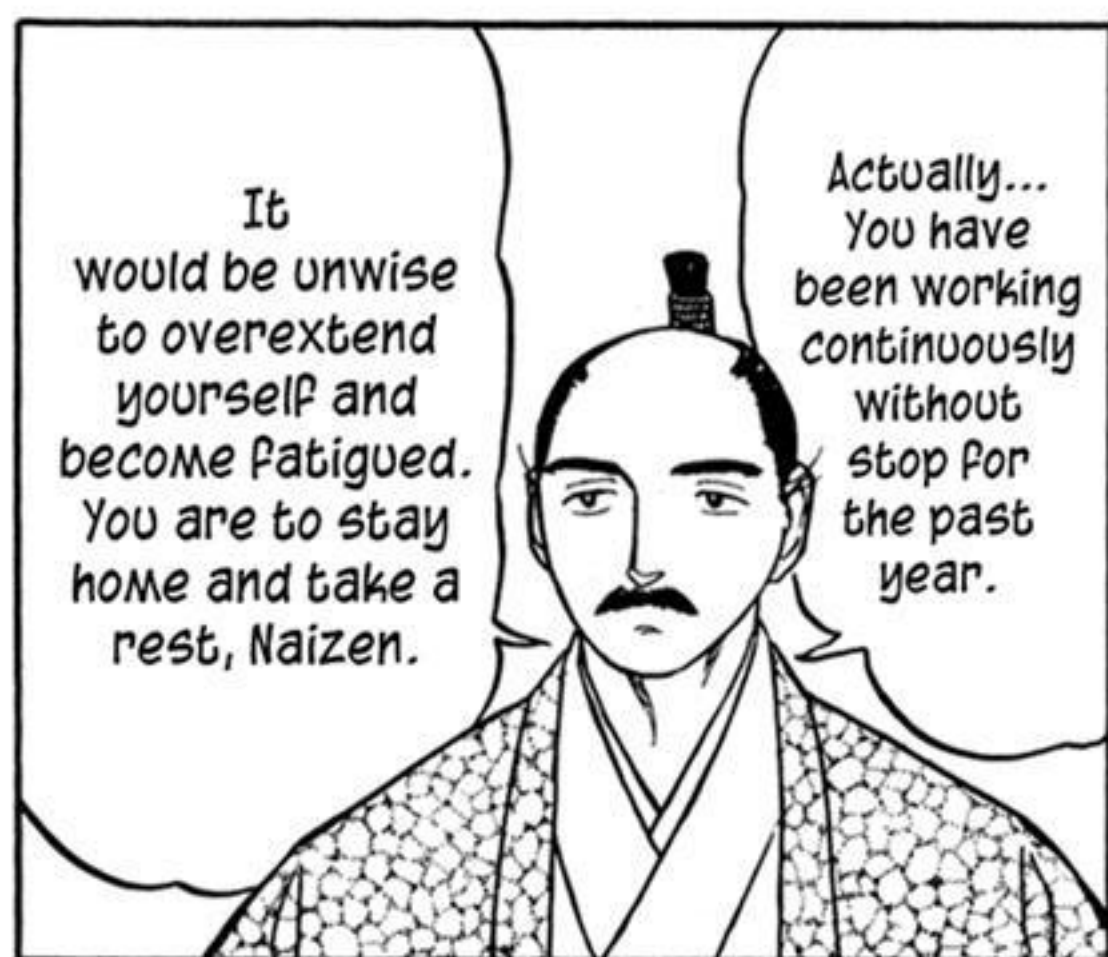
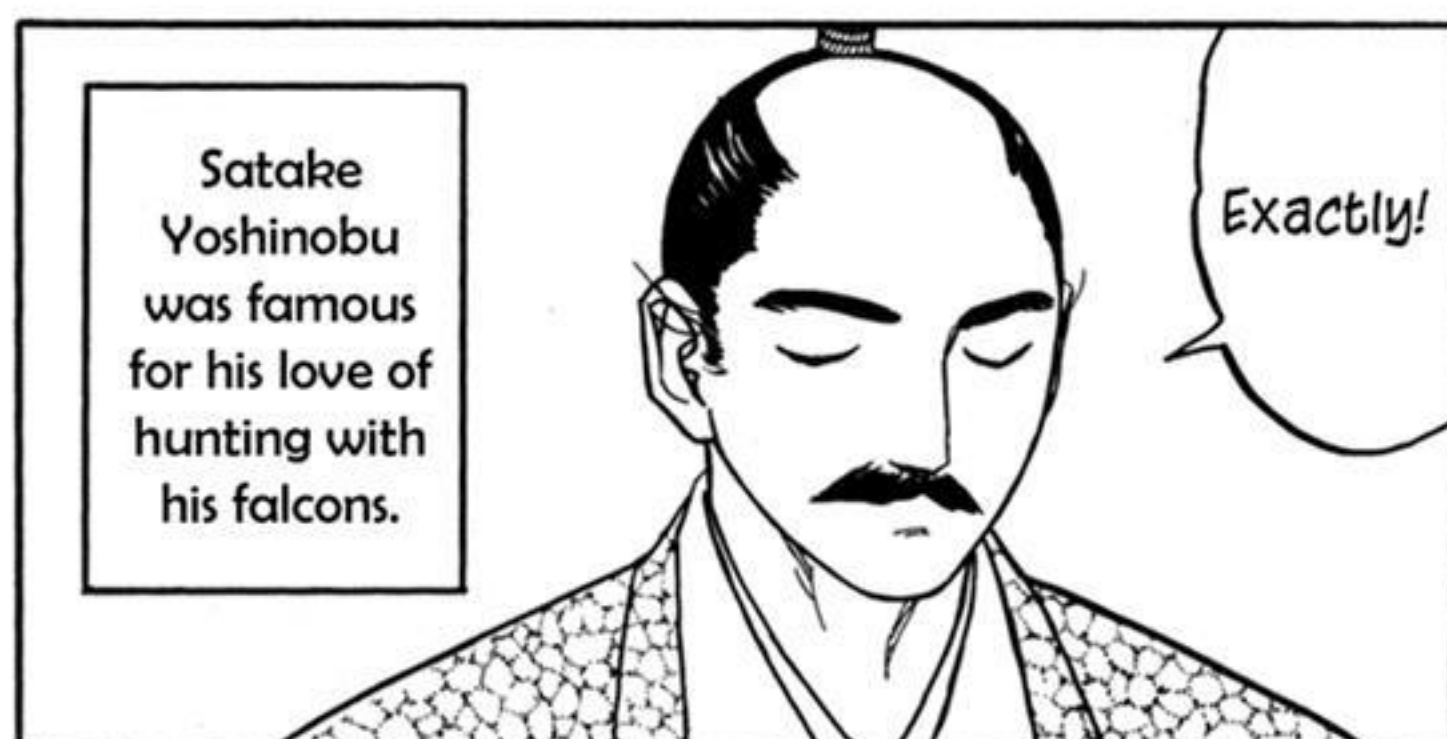
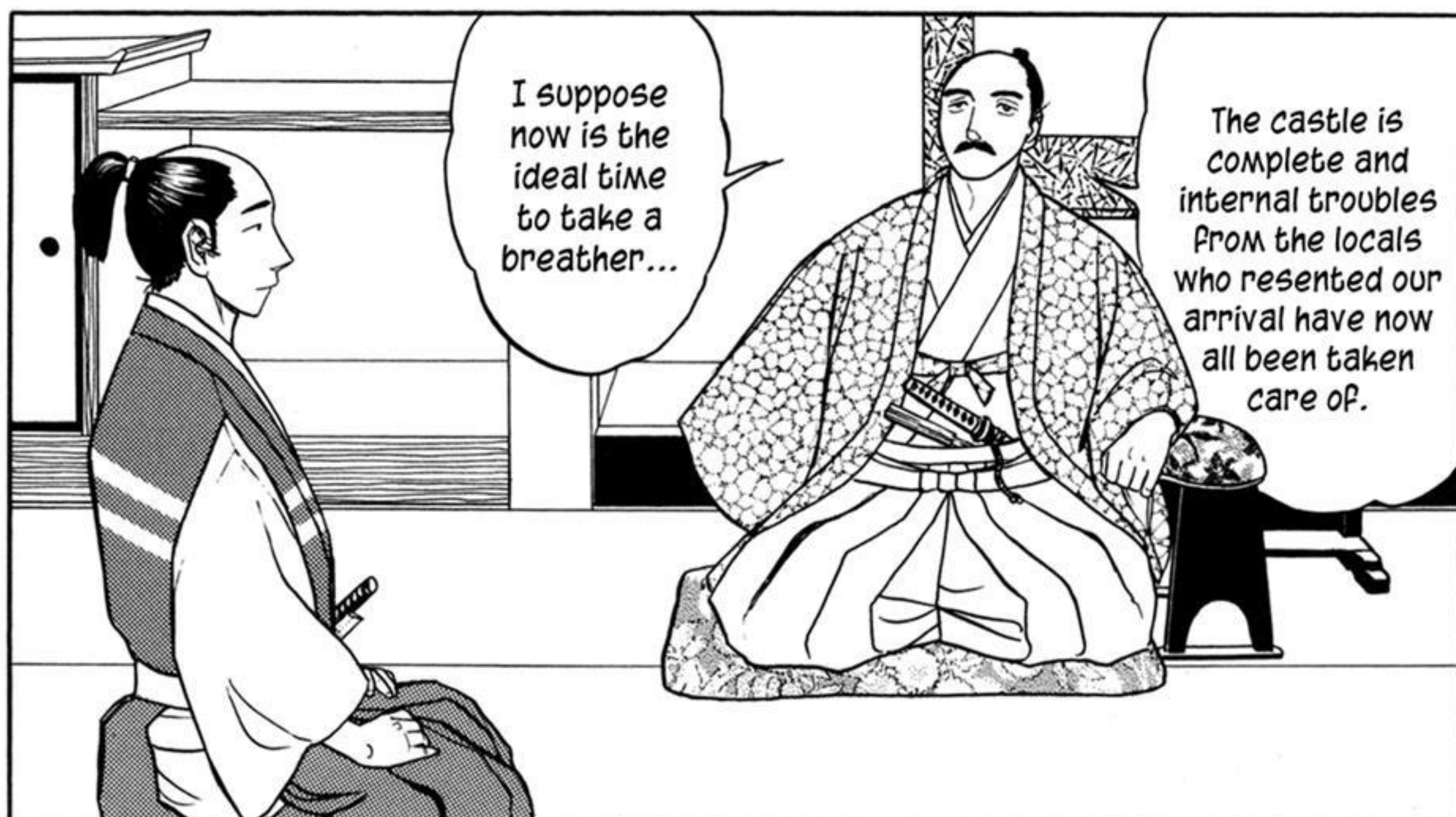
*T-T-
That's
absurd!*

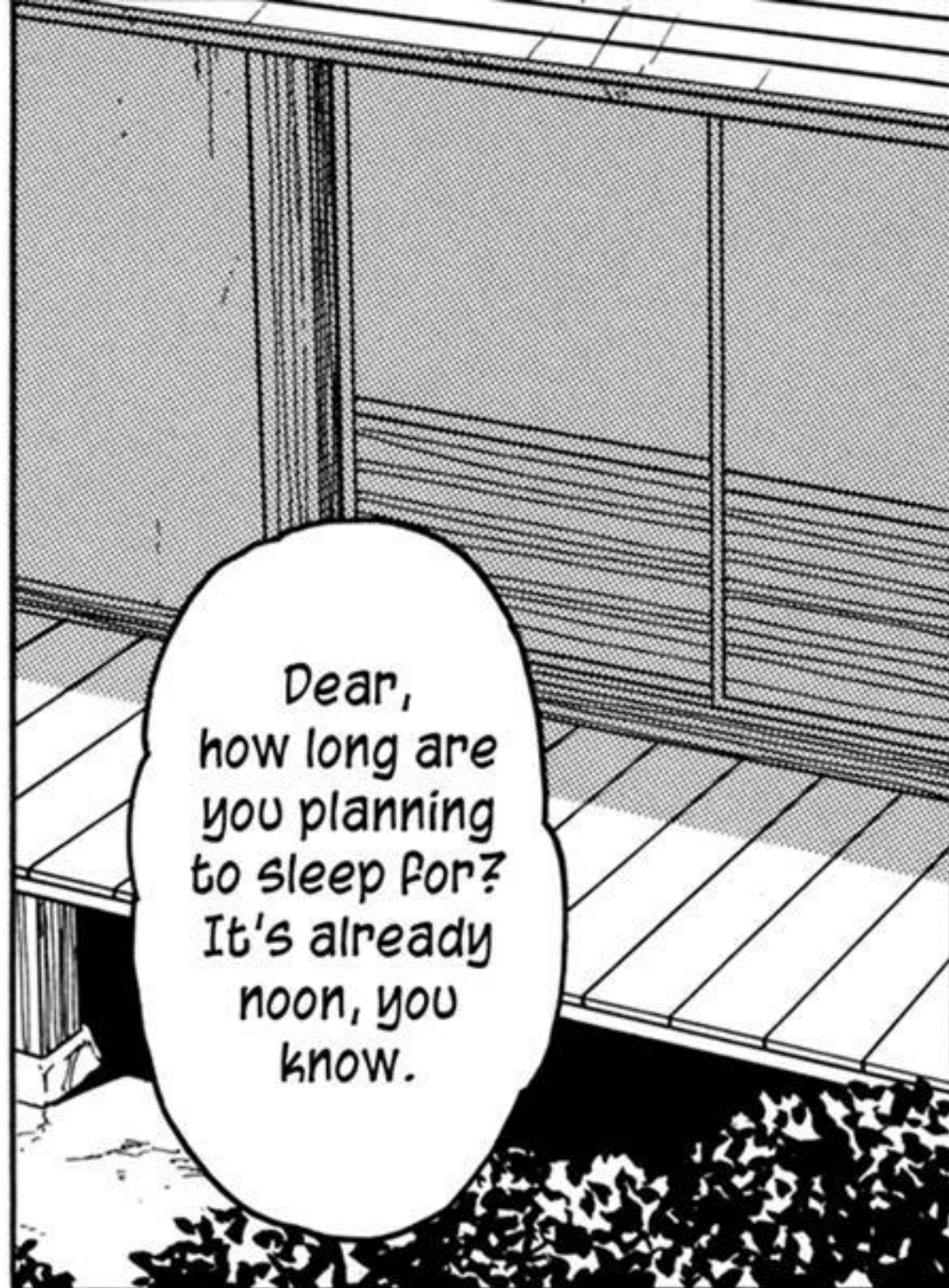




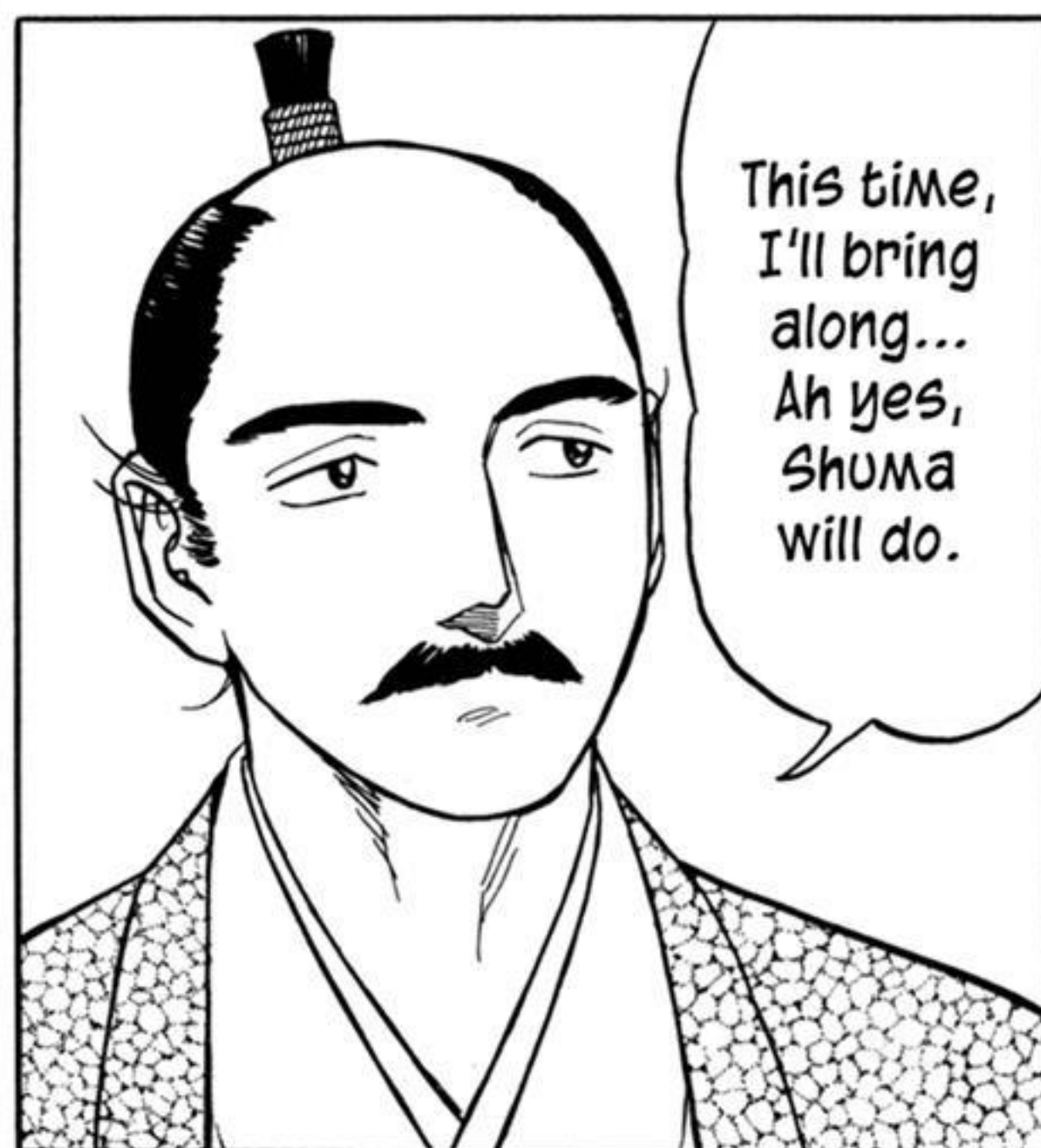








Dear,
how long are
you planning
to sleep for?
It's already
noon, you
know.



This time,
I'll bring
along...
Ah yes,
Shuma
will do.



You have
to sleep
when you
actually
have time!

It's fine,
the lord
specifically
instructed
me to take
a rest.



...



I'm not
going to
become
a Karō.

Oh,
that's
just a
rumour.



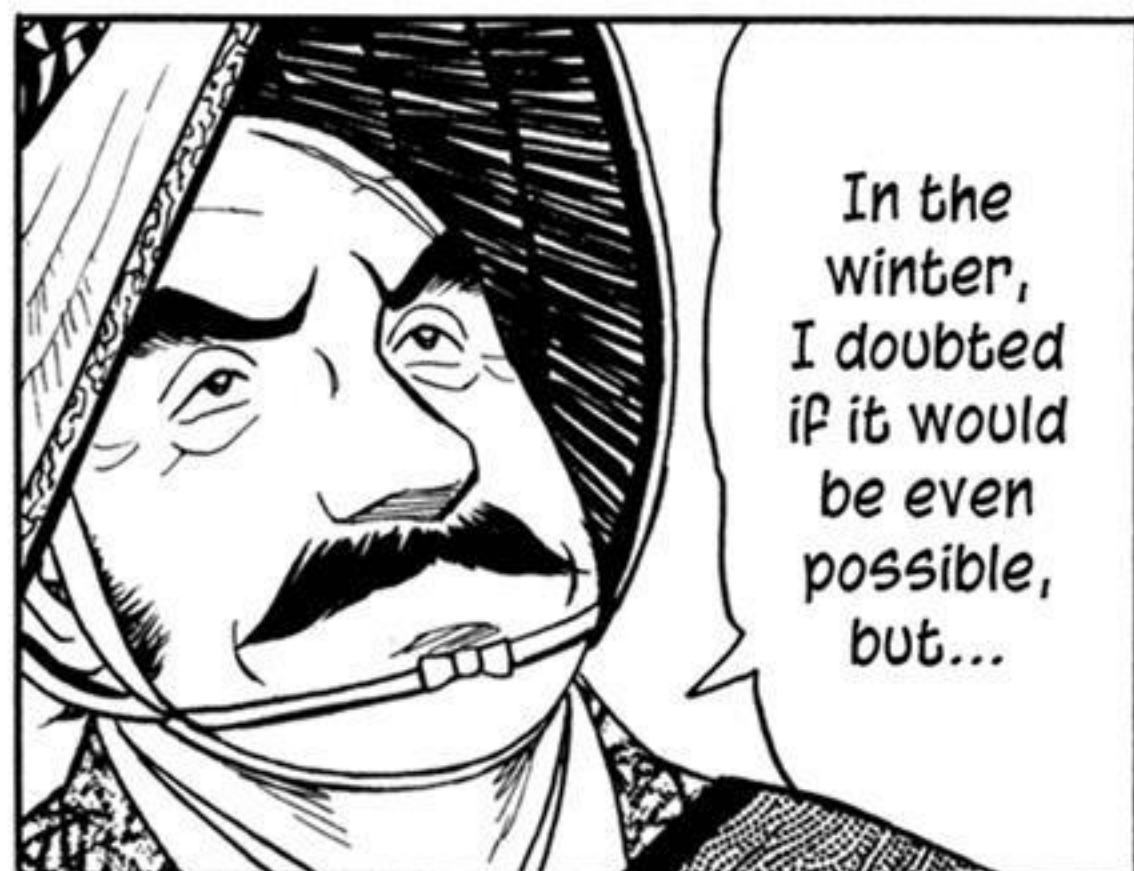
Sometimes,
I wonder
how you'll
ever cut
it out as
a Karō...



Ahh...
What fine
weather
we have
today.



The summer
and fall here is
perfectly suited
for hawk-hunting,
just as with Hitachi.
It goes to show how
even the farthest
reaches of a land is
perfectly liveable
once you try...



In the
winter,
I doubted
if it would
be even
possible,
but...



That's not
very like you
at all.

Why so
senti-
mental,
Ise?



Since coming to Dewa, I was wracked with worries about my lord forgetting us old retainers...



I am merely expressing my delight, that is all.

Ha...



Yes, but now that the troubles are over, we can enjoy ourselves falcon-hunting once more...



Which did not afford me the time to seek out your consent.

There were many matters of urgent importance since our arrival here,

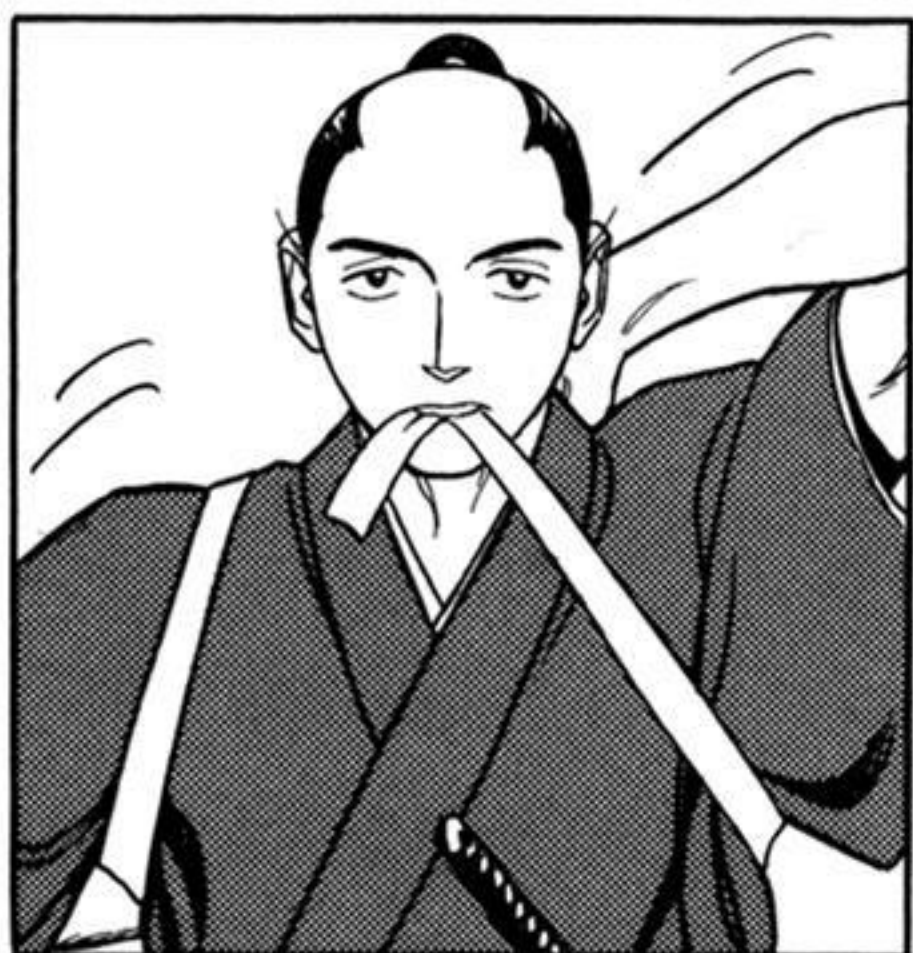
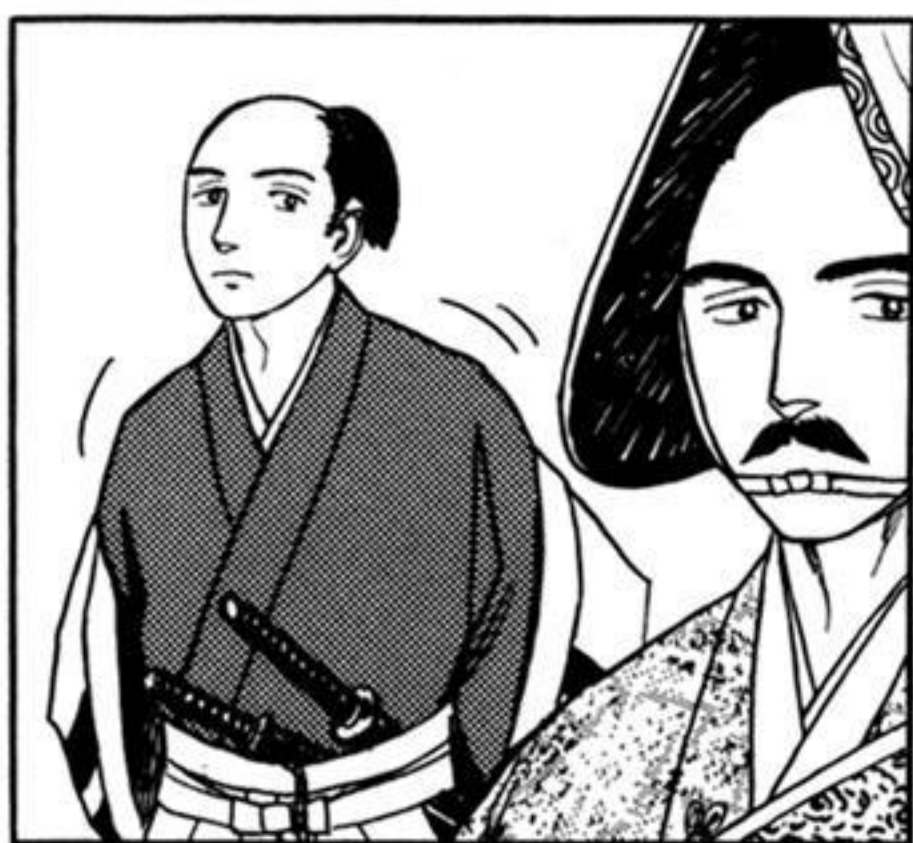


Although my actions in the past year were solely for the good of our entire clan, I apologize for all the grievances I may have inflicted...



I am truly grateful from the bottom of my heart that you invited this worthless old fool!

My lord!



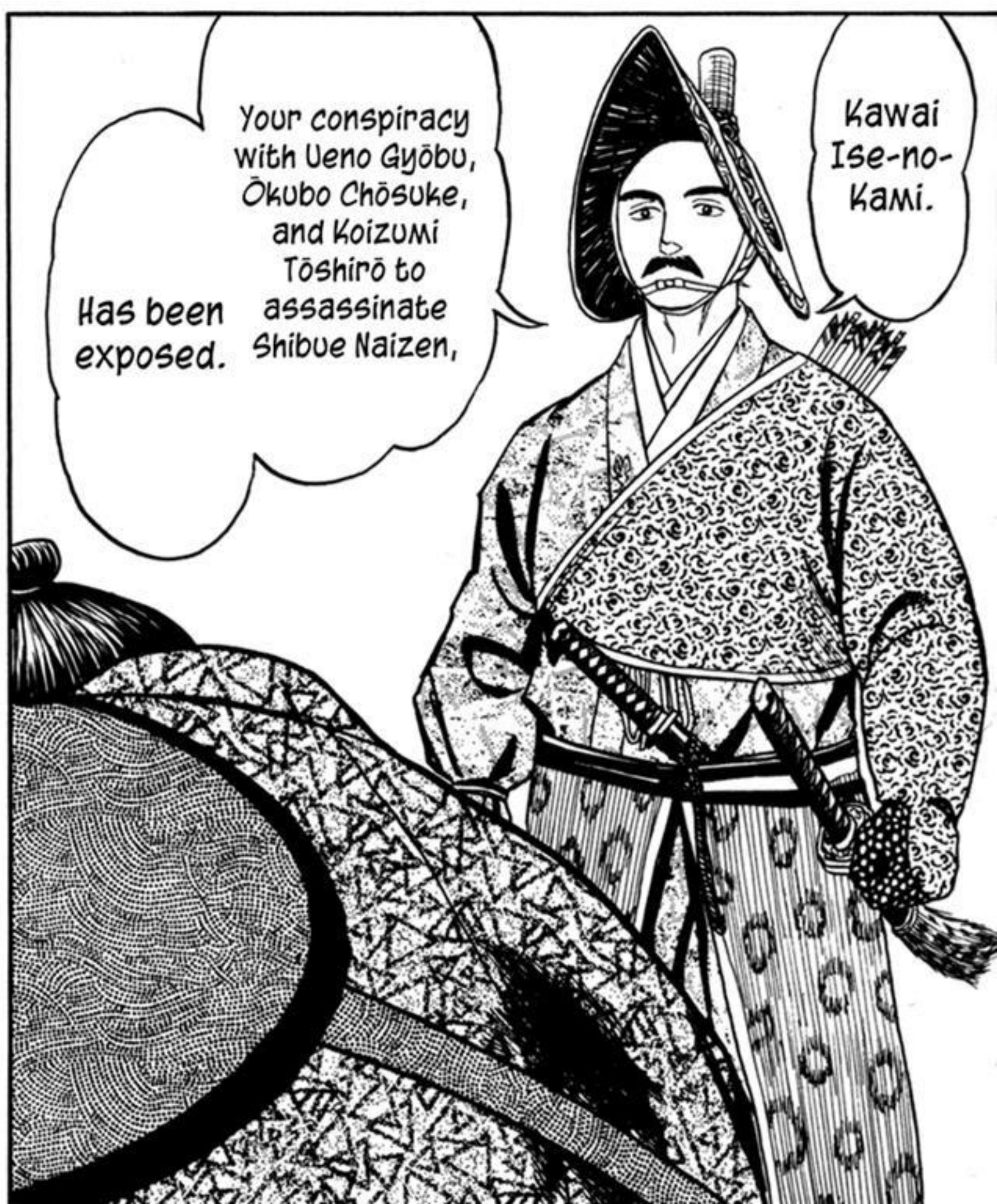
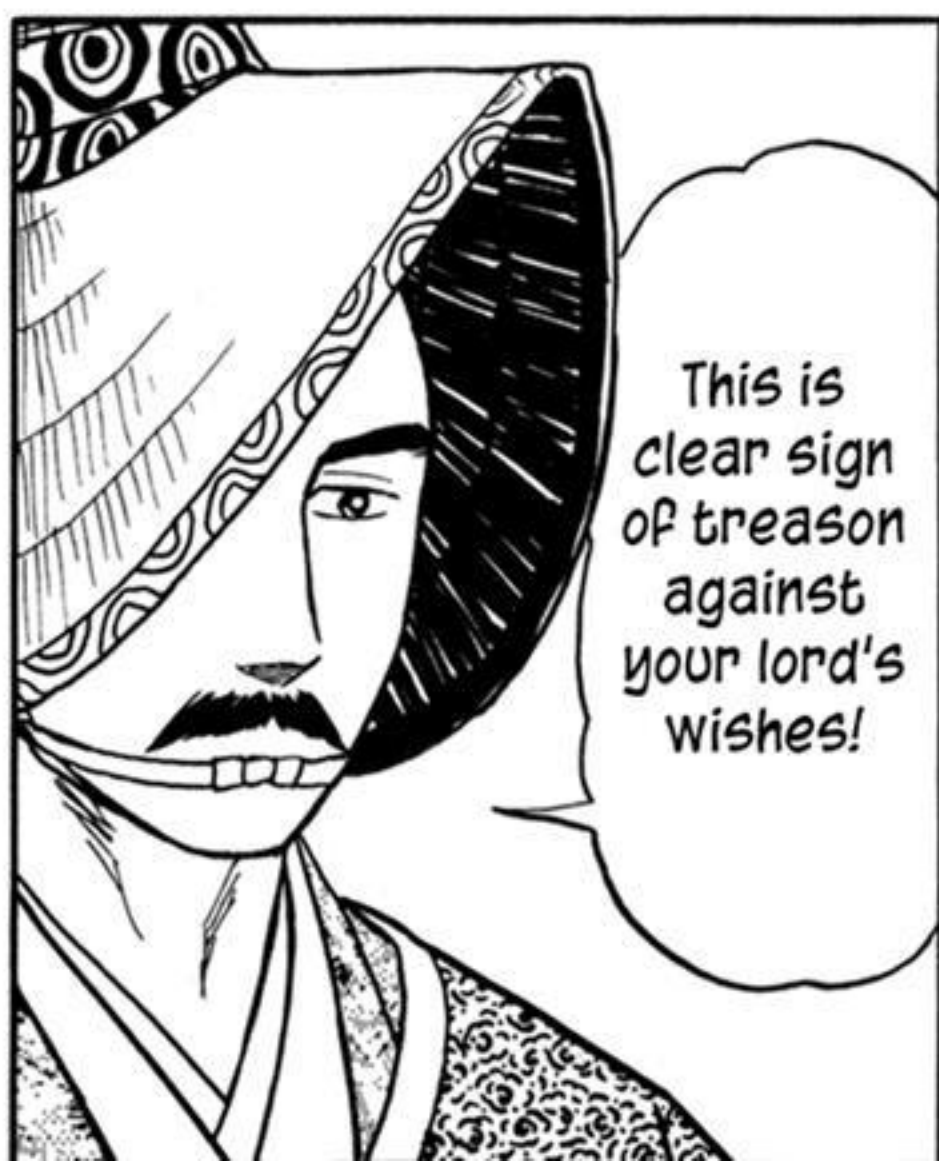






35

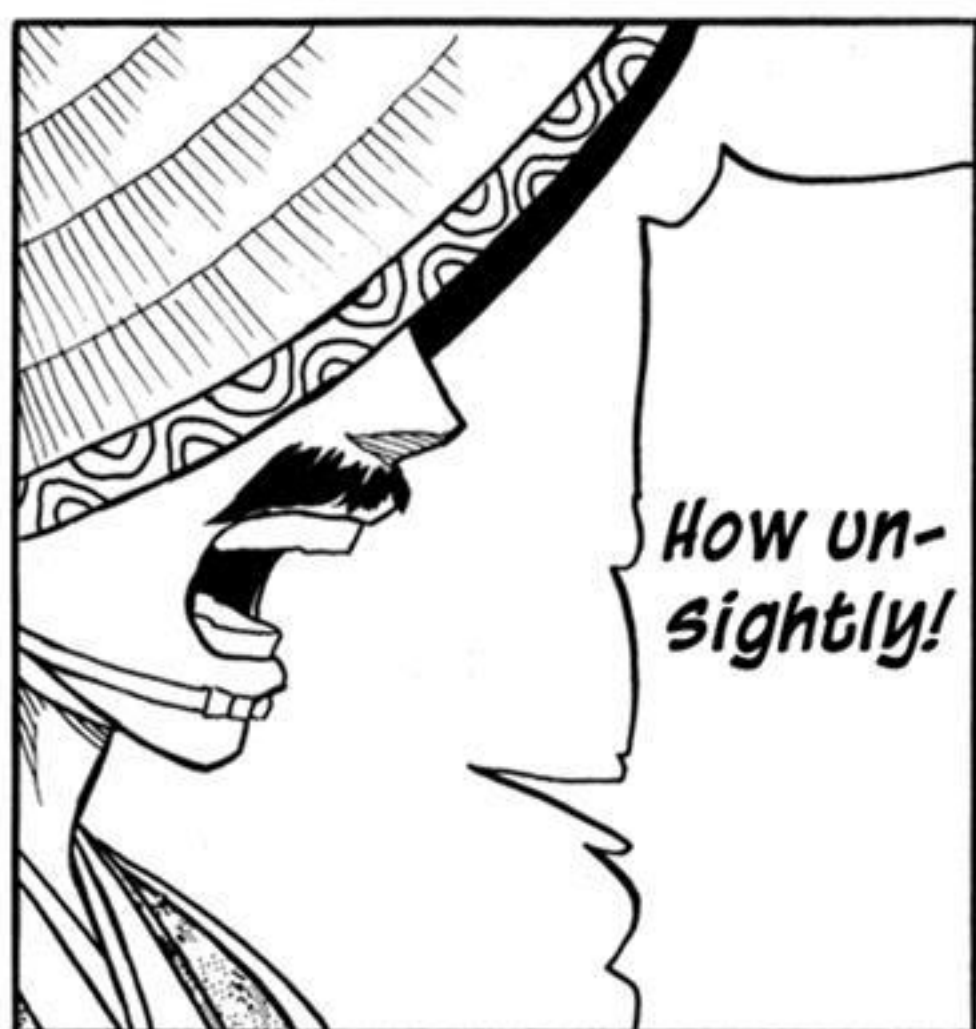






*This is a
misunder-
standing!*

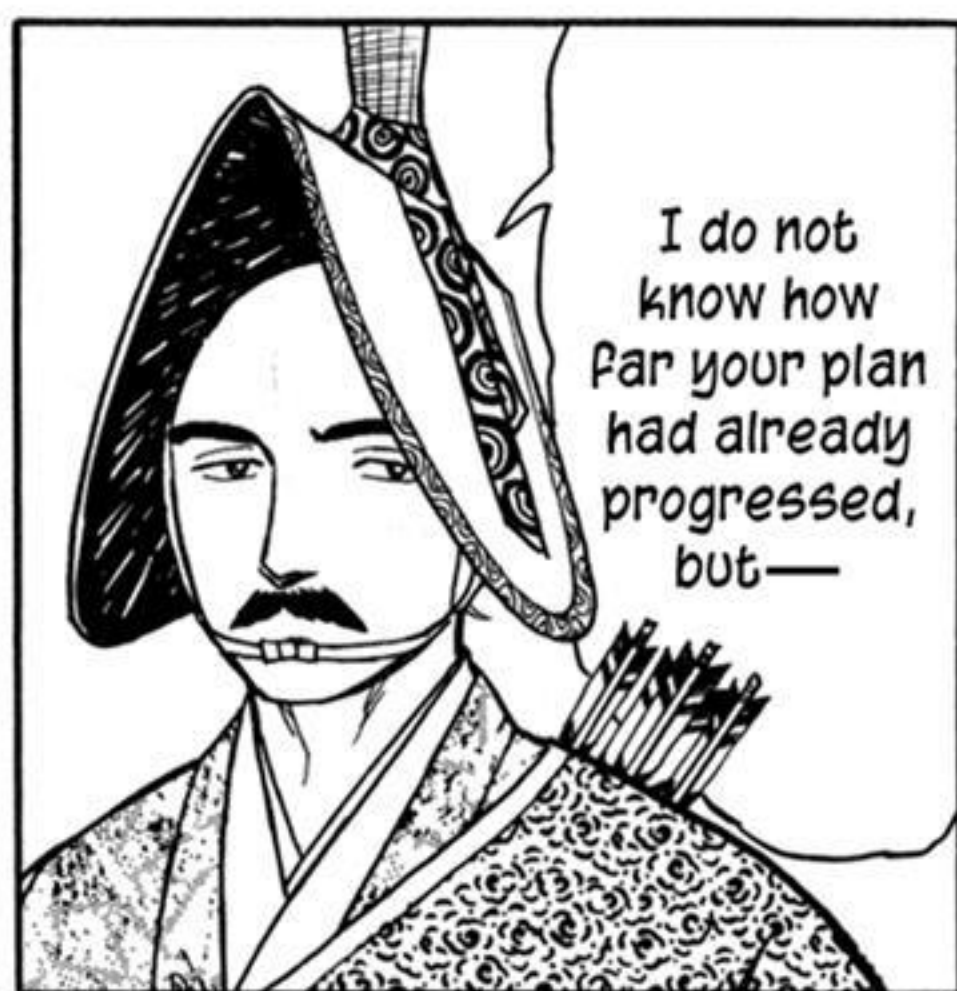
This—



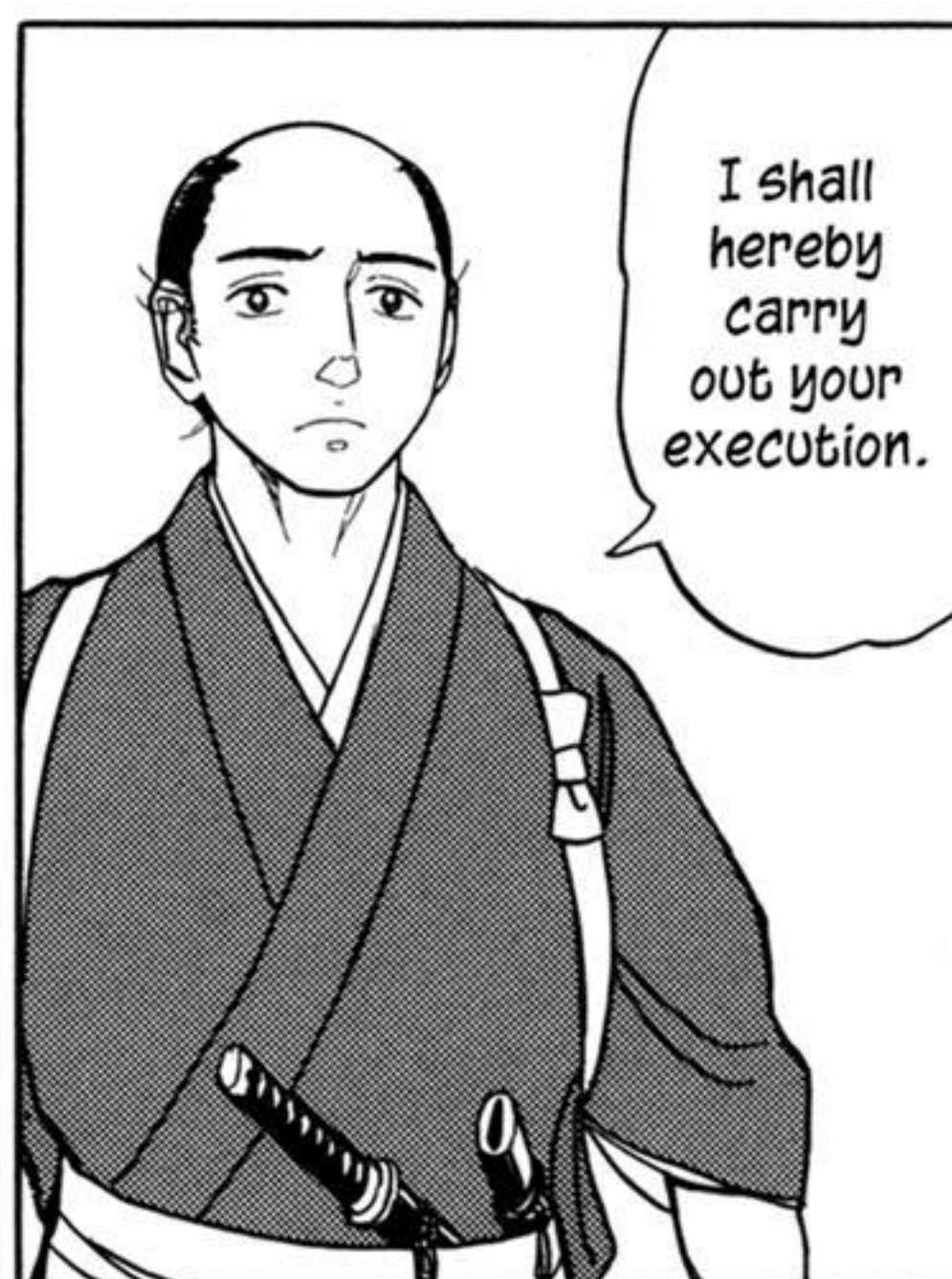
*How un-
sightly!*



*I see...
So from
the start,
my lord
was...*



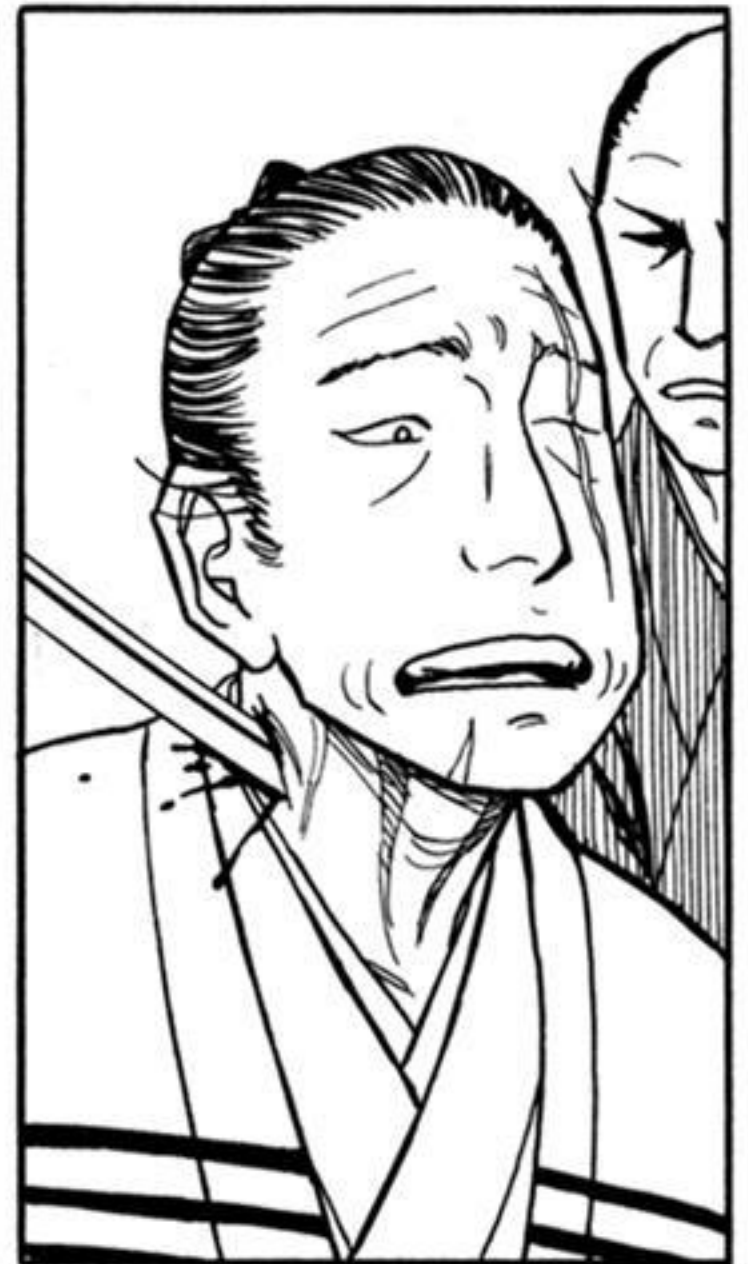
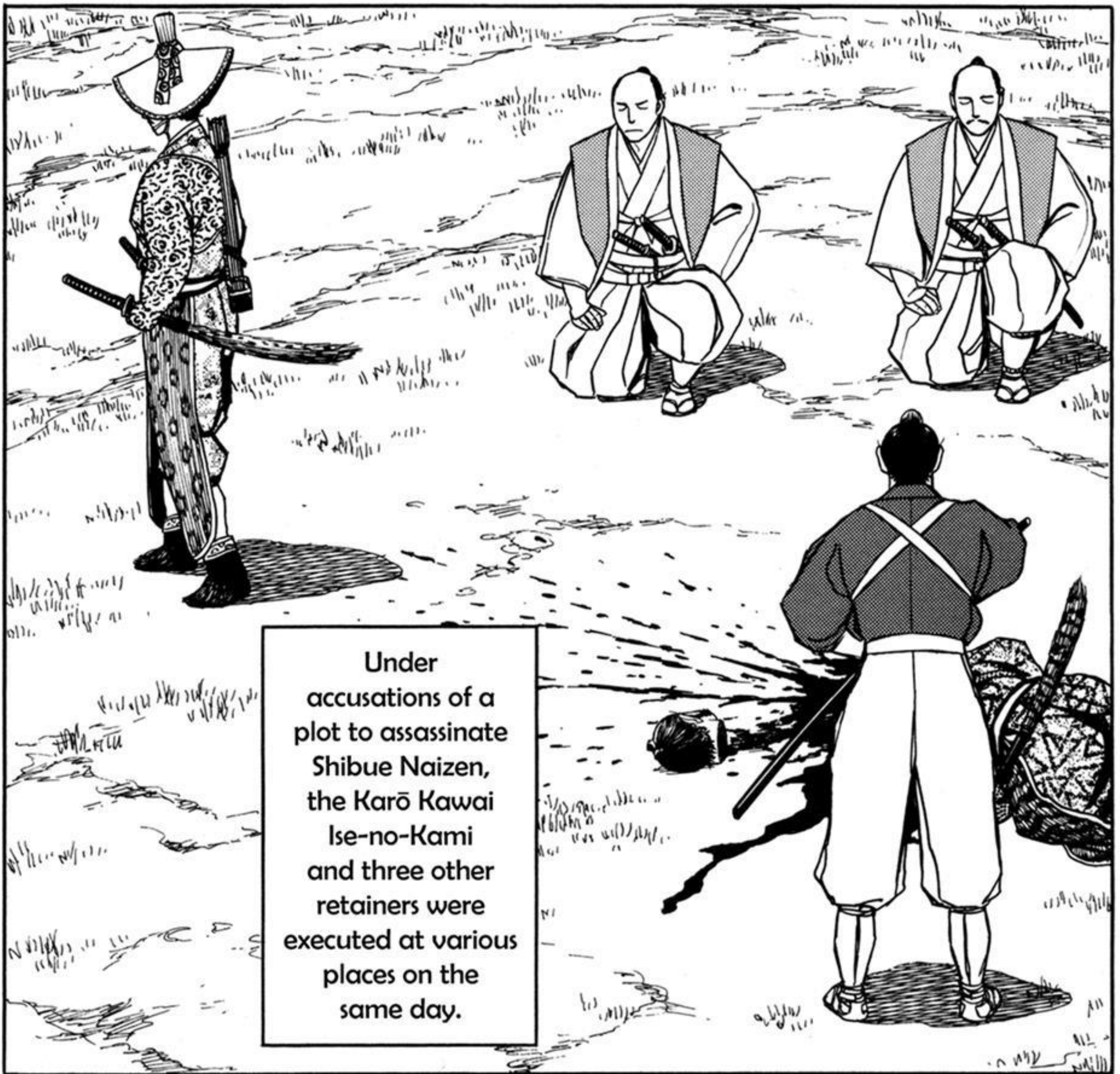
*I do not
know how
far your plan
had already
progressed,
but—*





...Yes,
it is best
that you
return.





In hindsight,
they can
all be seen
as sharing
the same
underlying
cause.



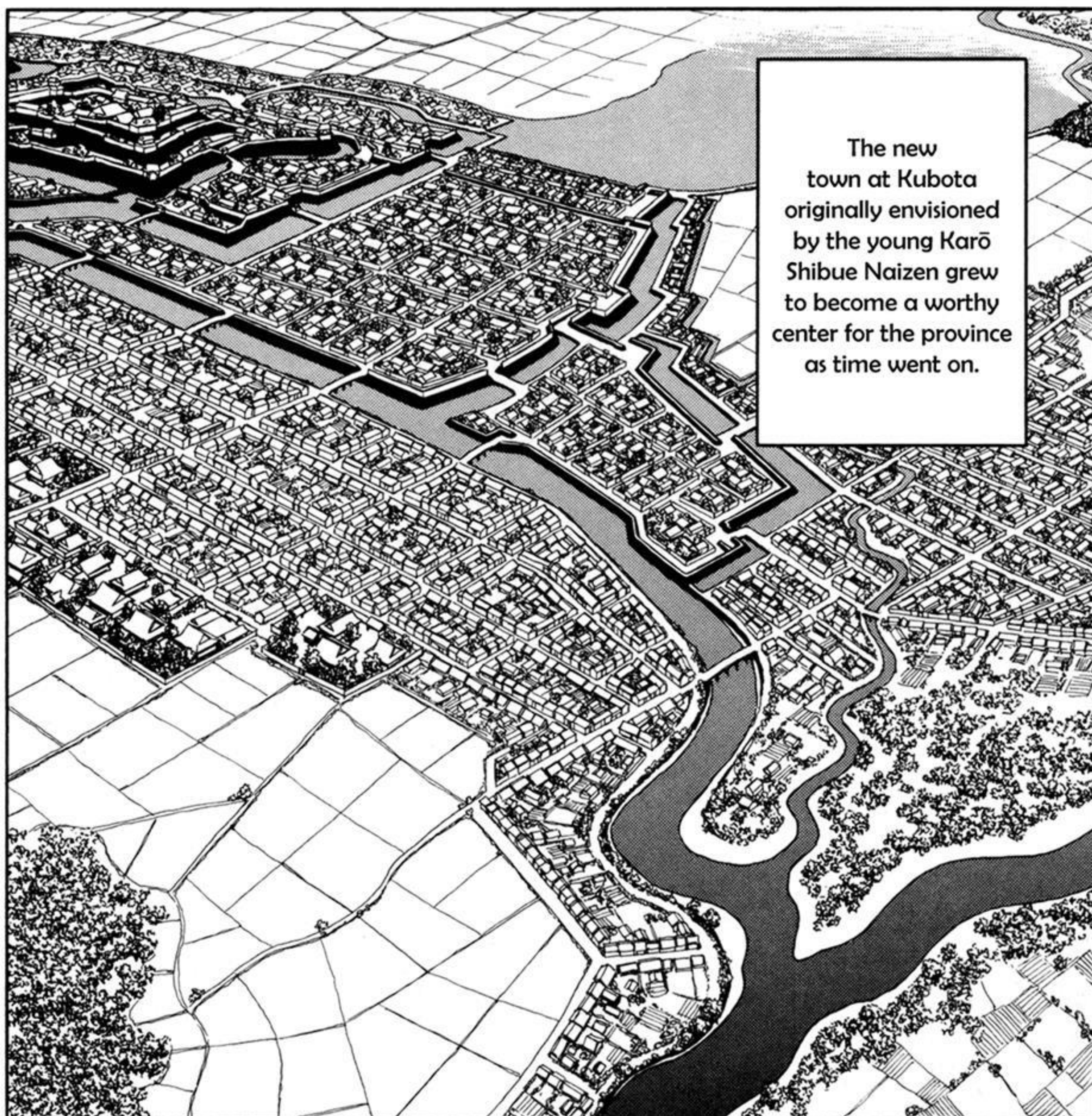
Wada
and Onuki's
retirement,
Kawai and
his fellows'
executions,
and Kajiwara's
disappearance...

At last,
with the
promotion
of Shibue
Naizen to
the post
of Karō,



Satake
Yoshinobu
secured his
firm control
over his clan
and new
domain.





The new town at Kubota originally envisioned by the young Karō Shibue Naizen grew to become a worthy center for the province as time went on.

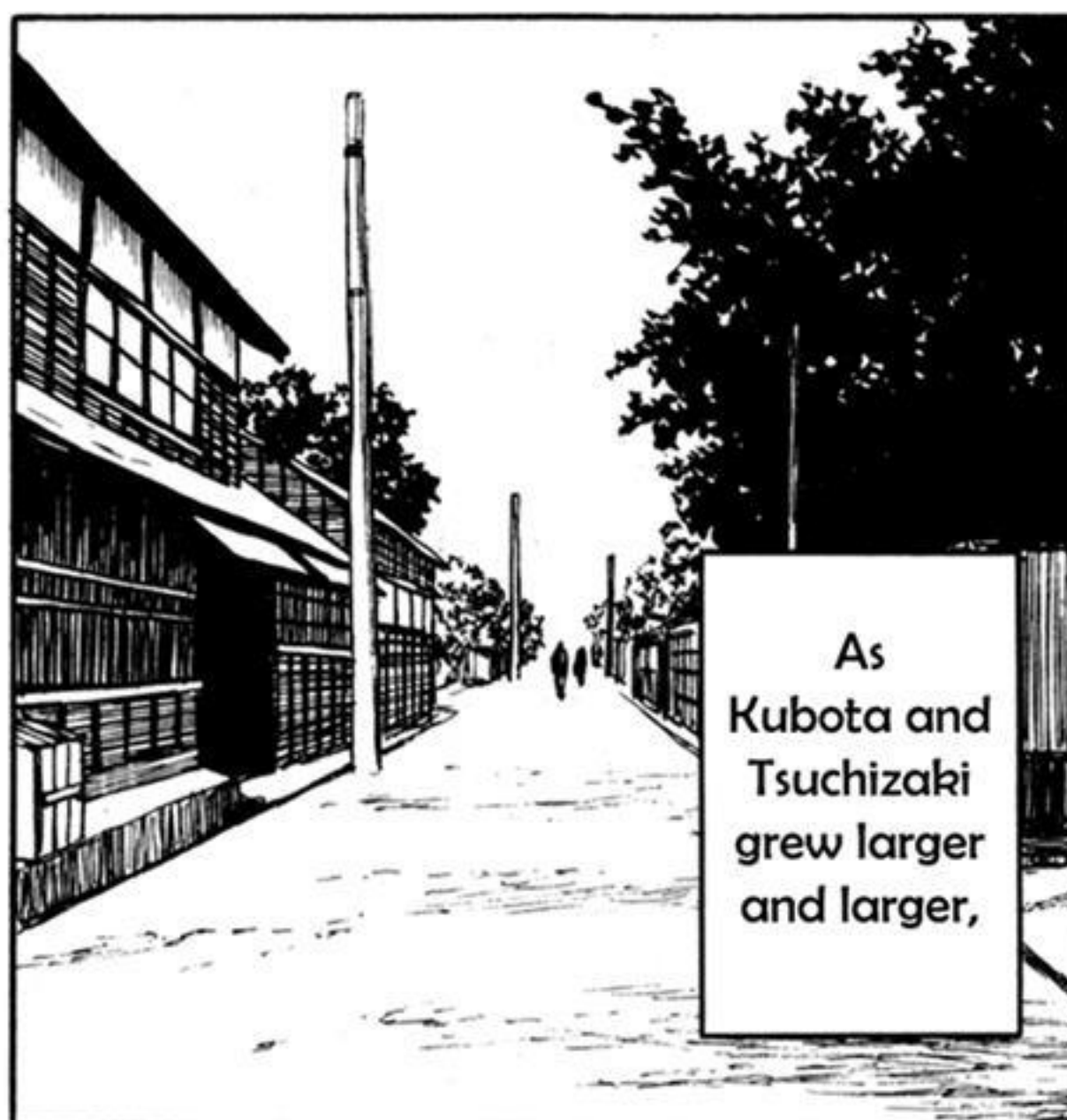
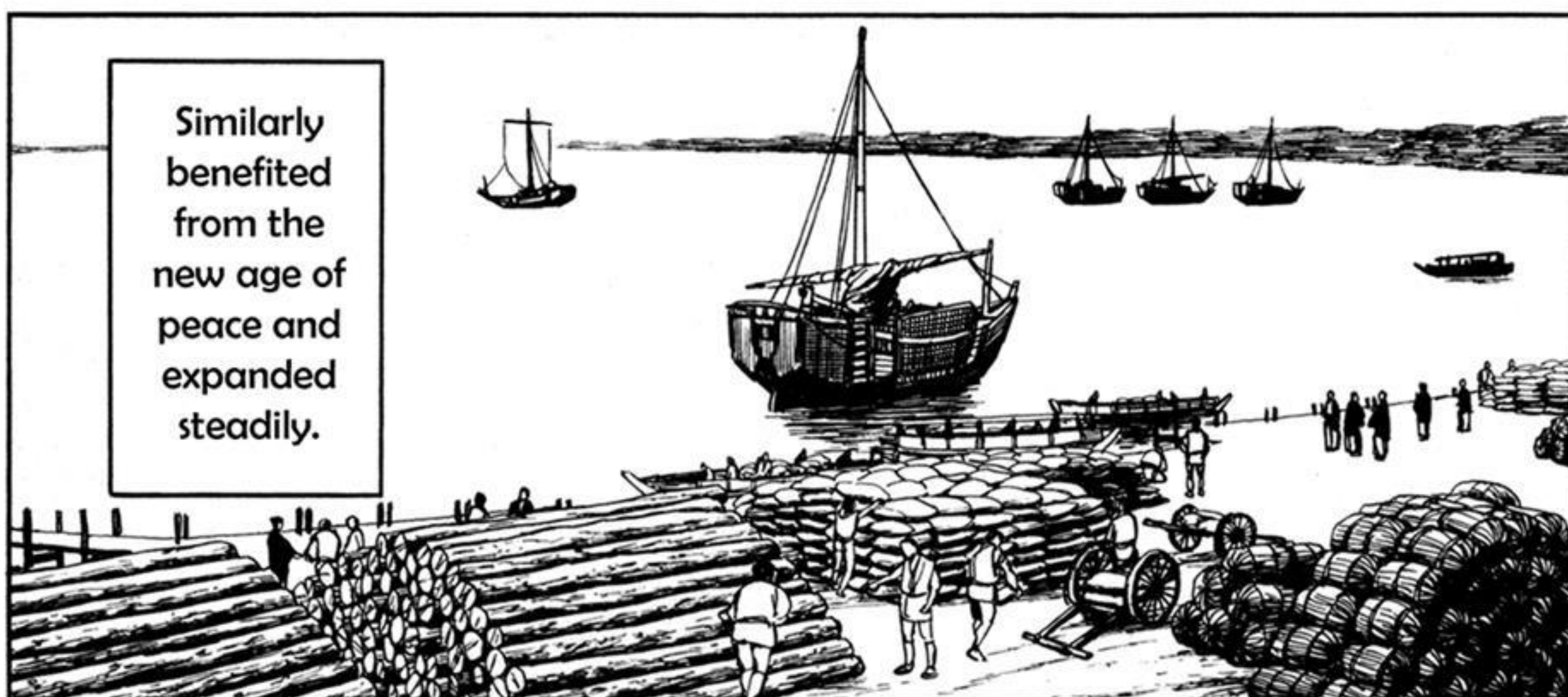


And the Dewa province too came to be known as Kubota province.

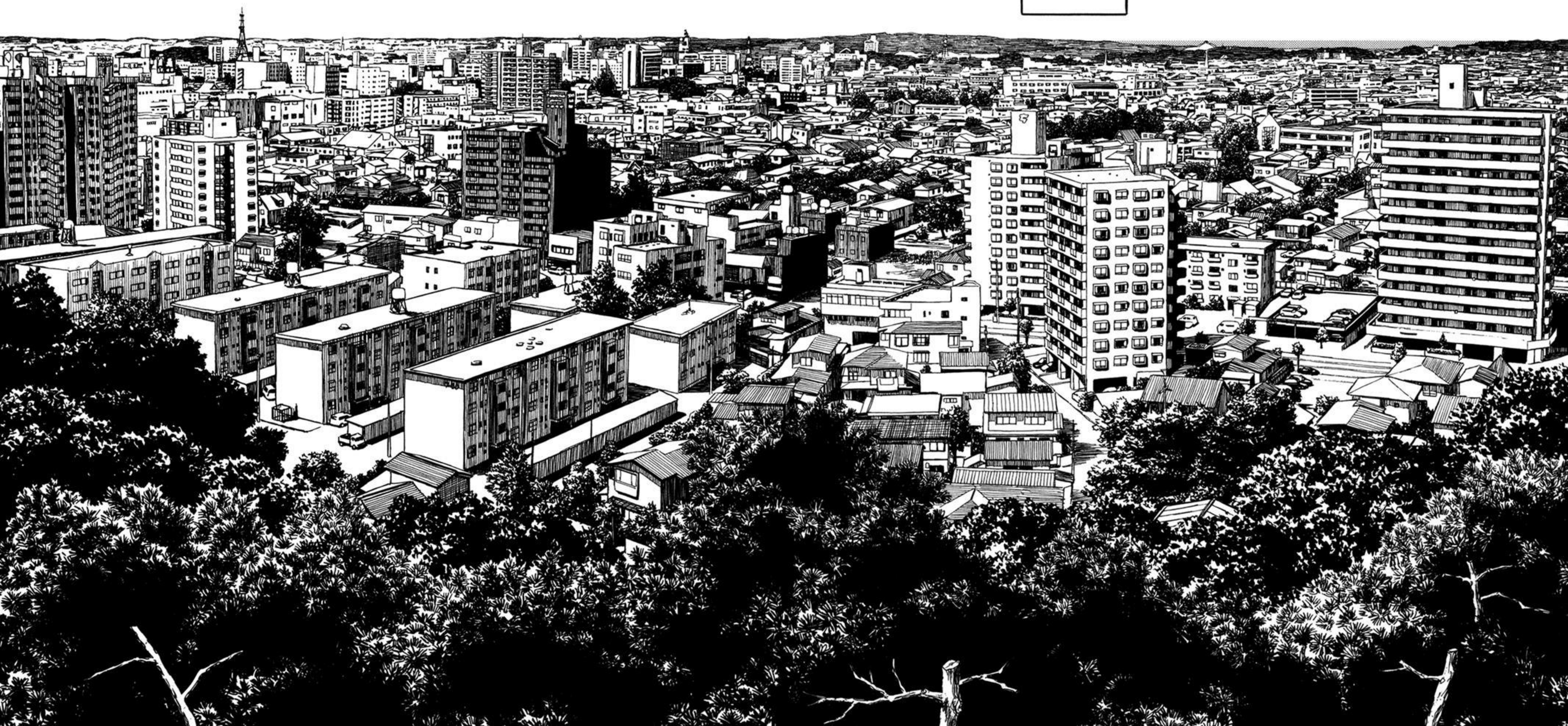
久保田藩

In time, the spelling of its name changed from 窪田 to 久保田,

*Plate reads "Kubota province"



It is
known to
us in the
modern-
day as
Akita city.

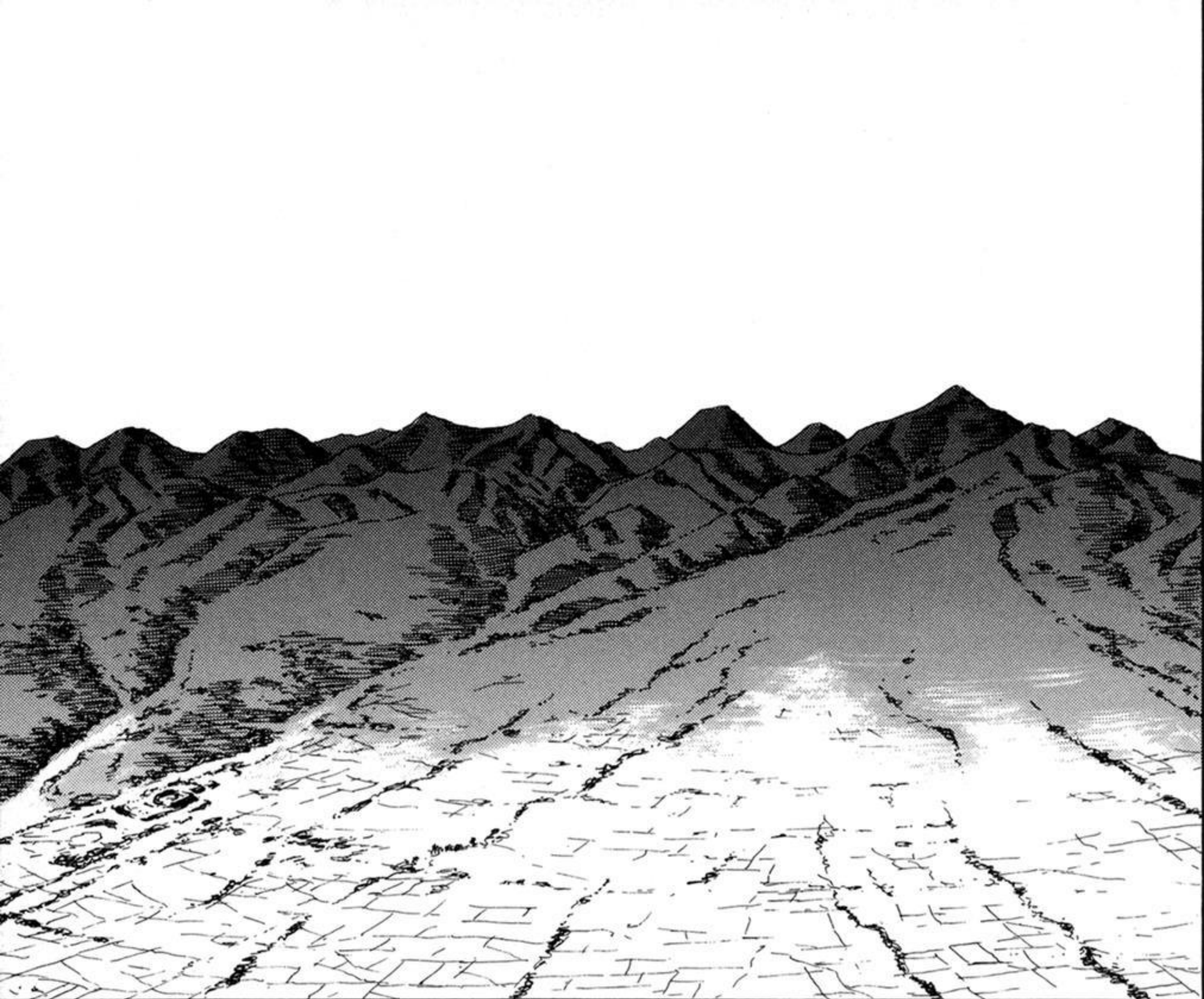


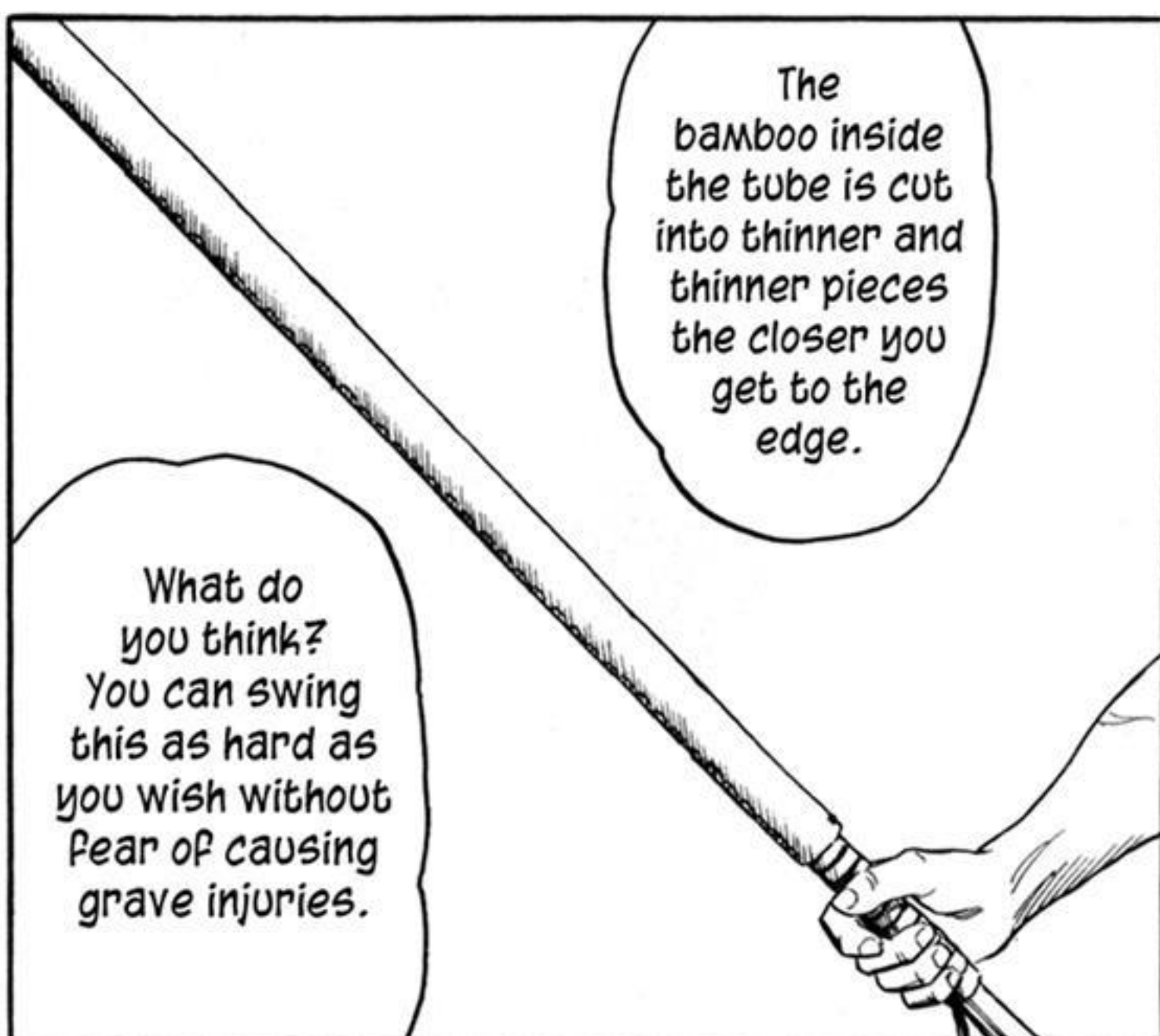
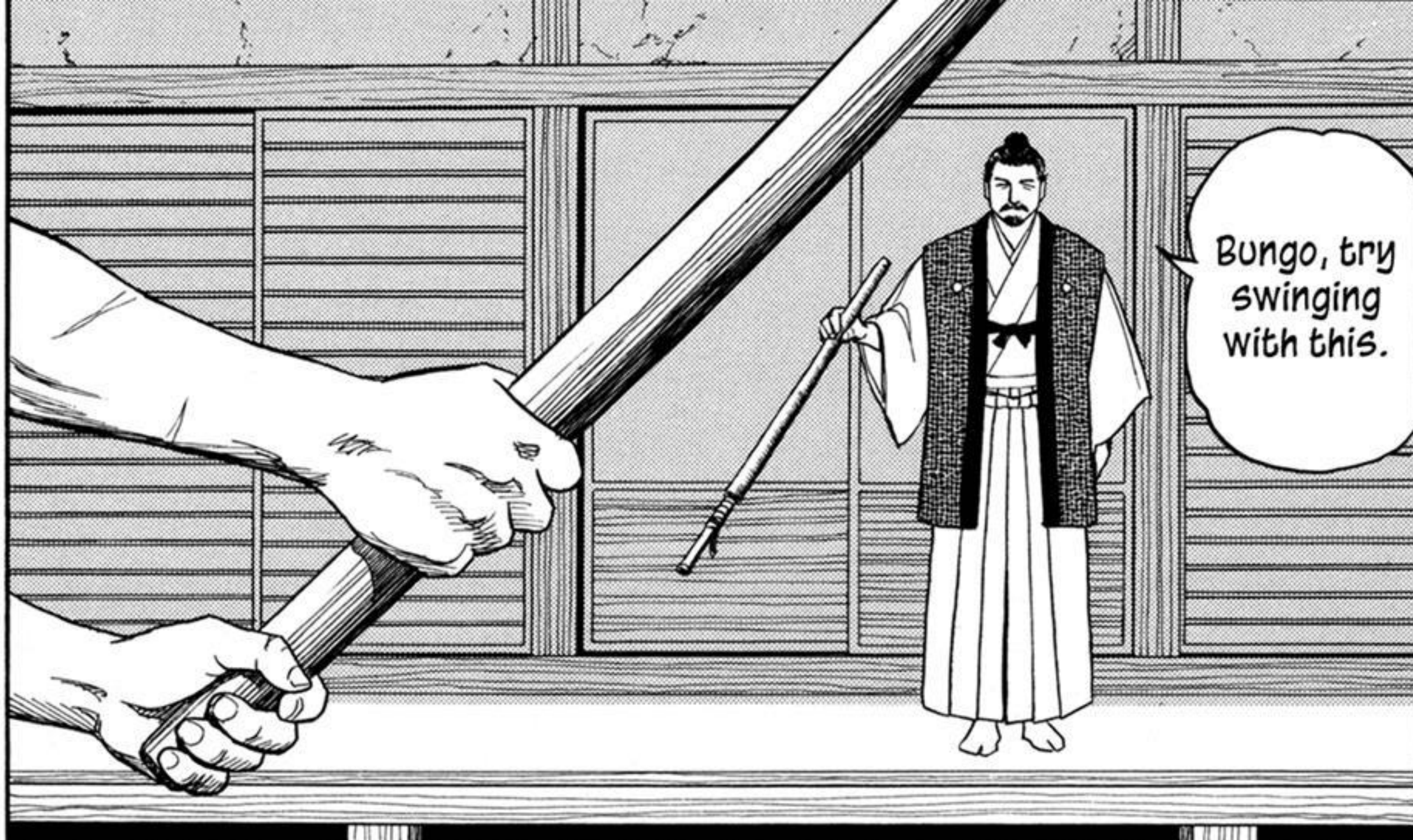


Sword Dance

Chapter 1: Gold Coin



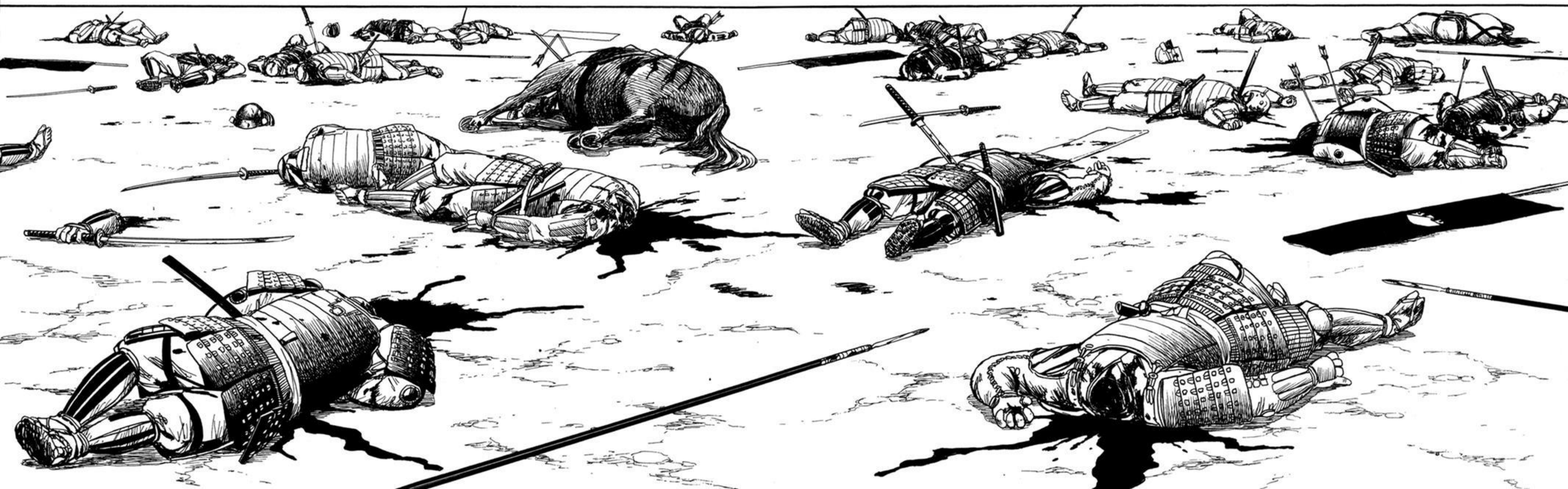
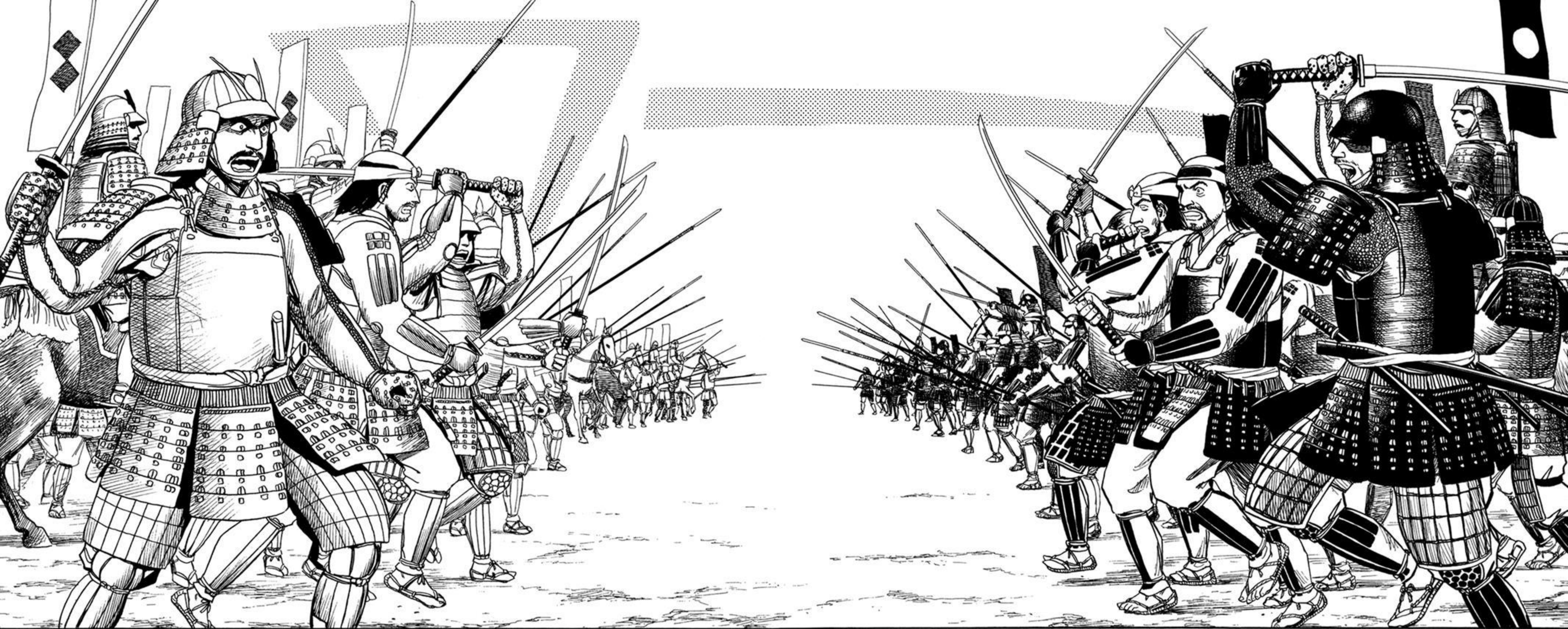


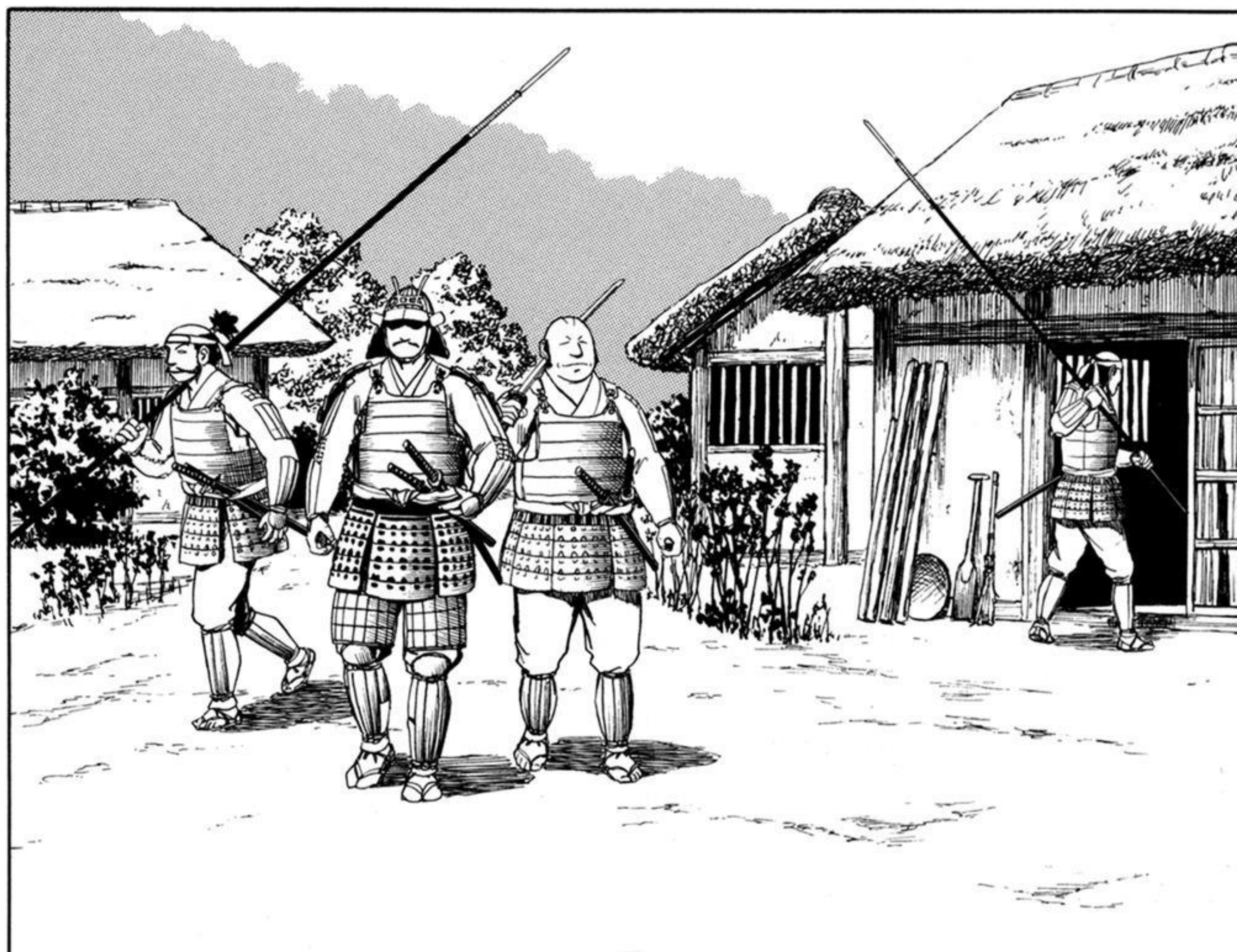
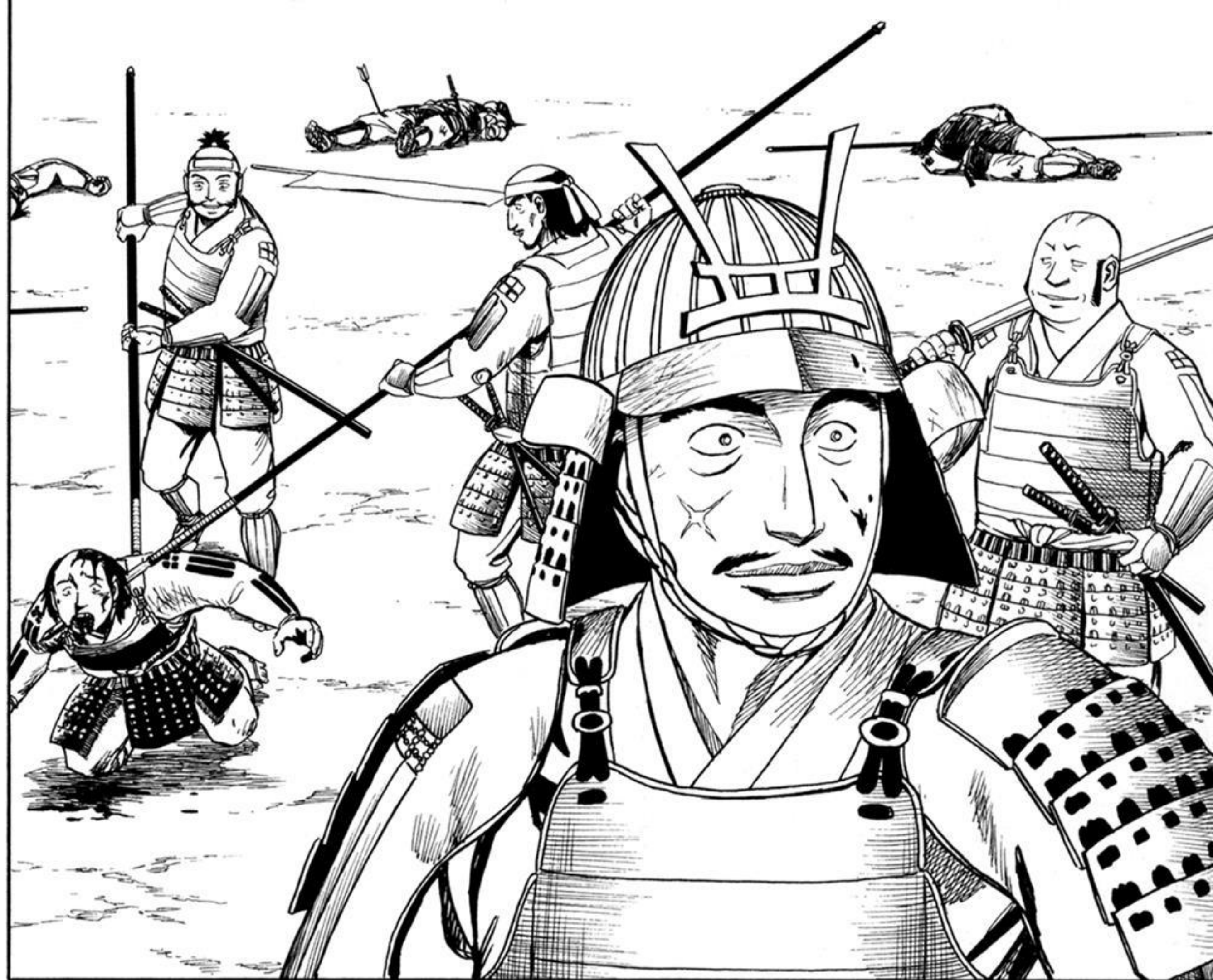




*Shinai is the adjectival form for the verb shinau, meaning "to bend/flex"

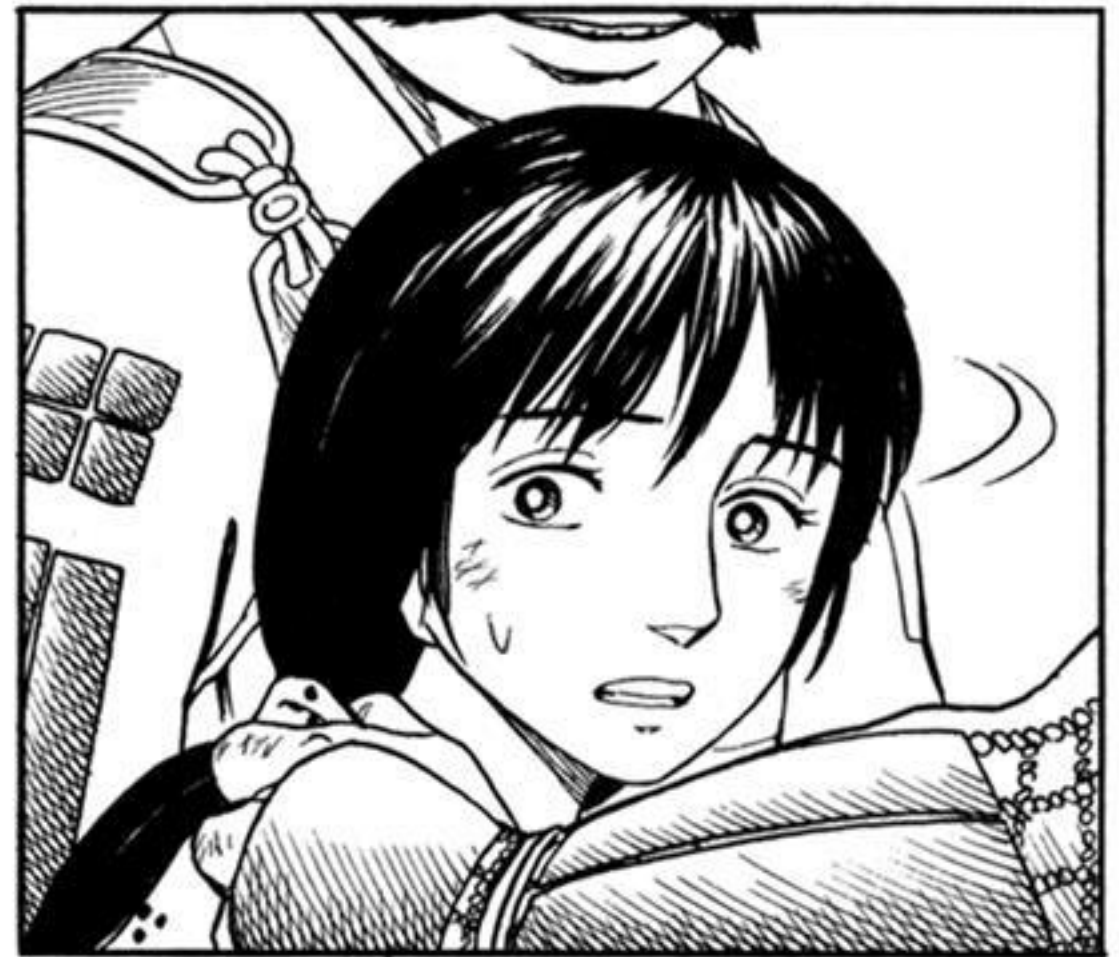
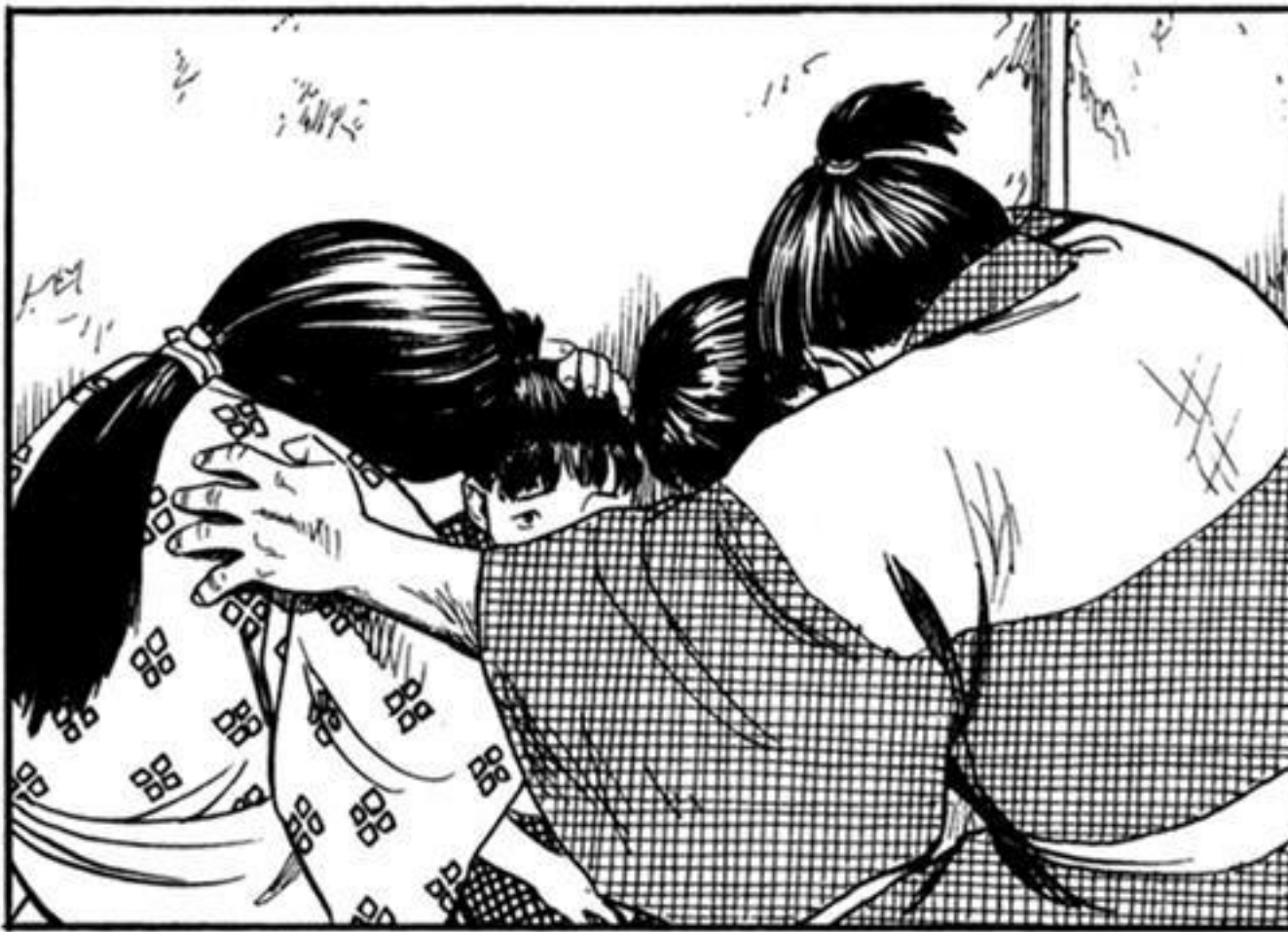
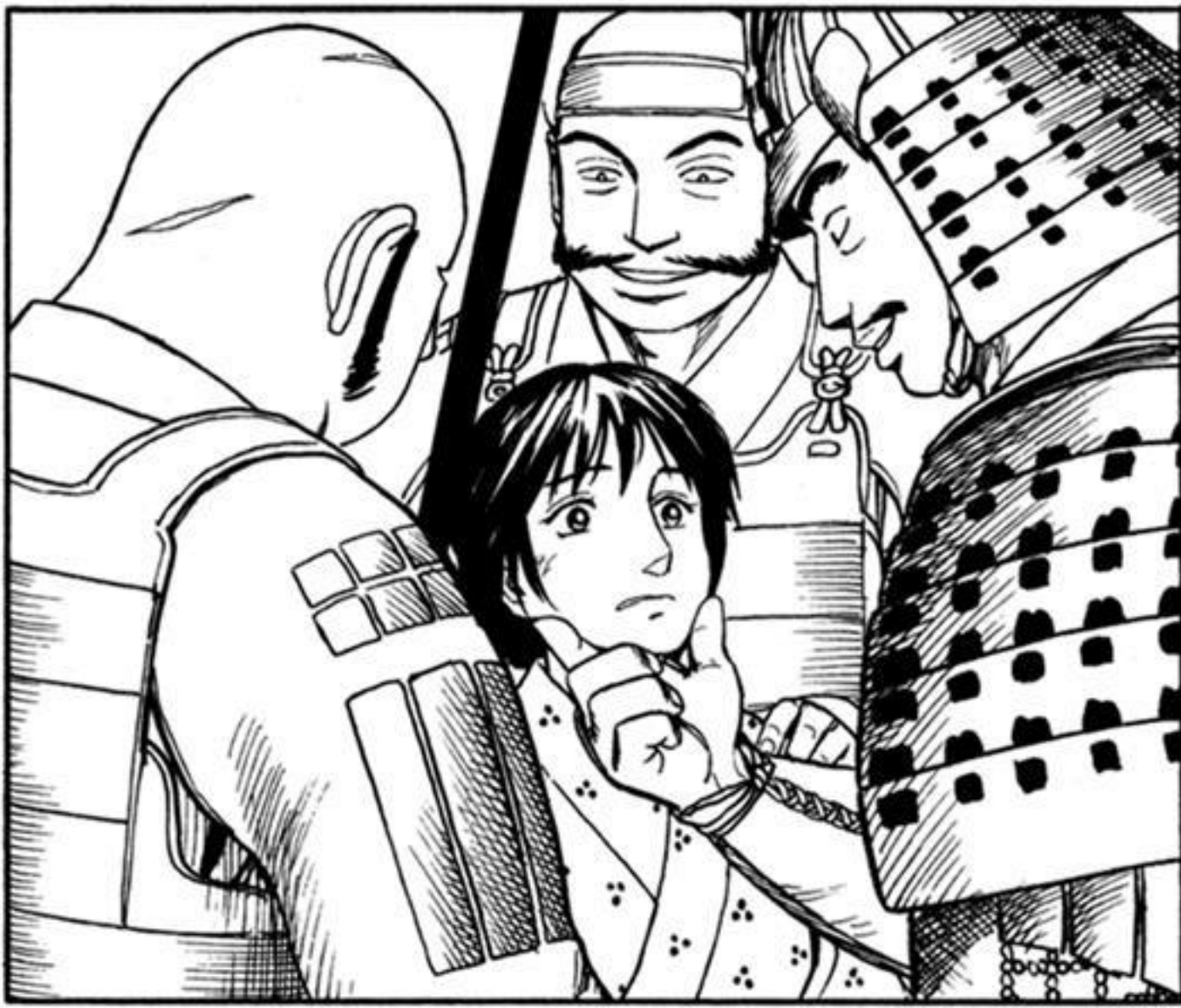


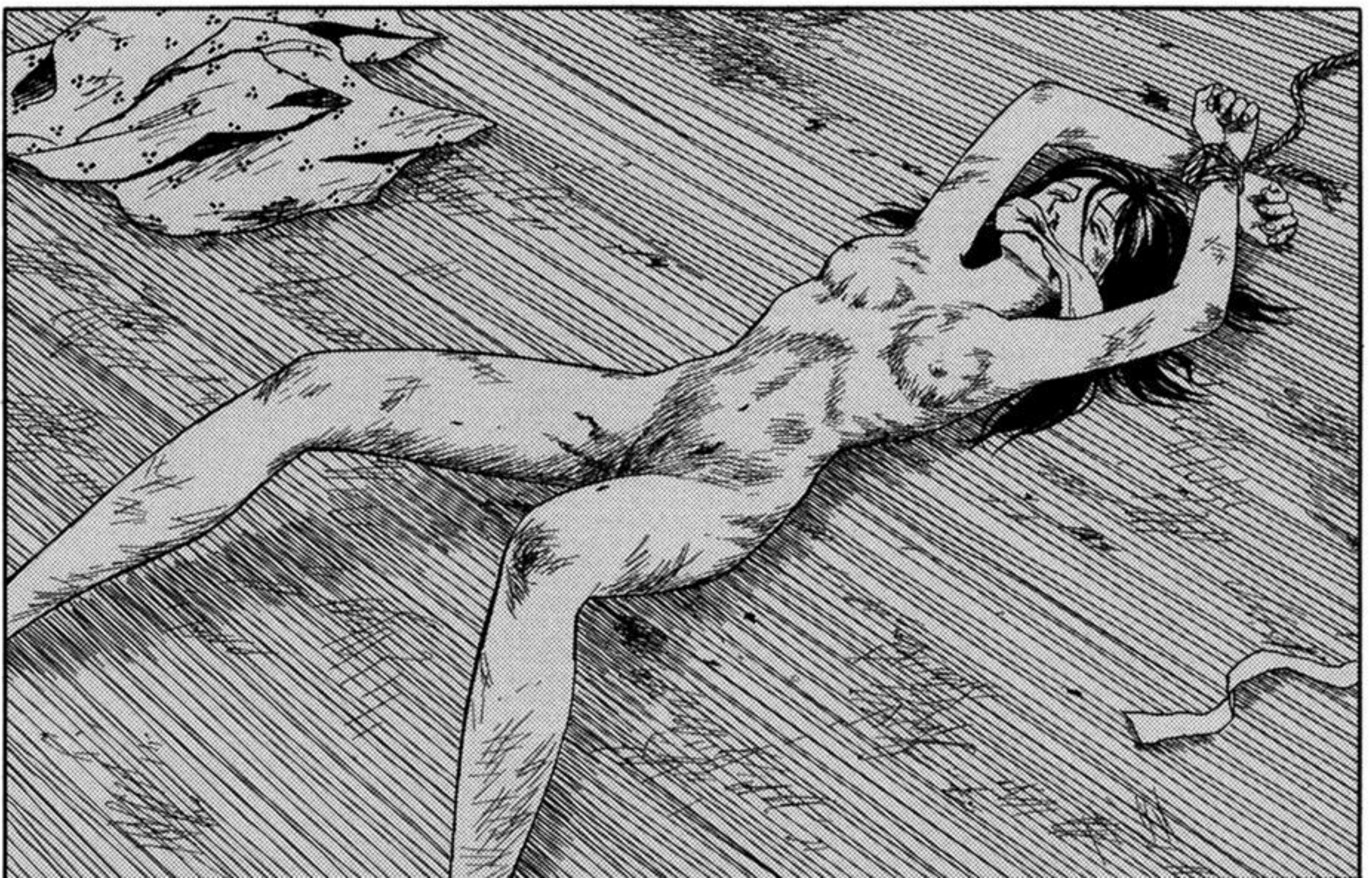


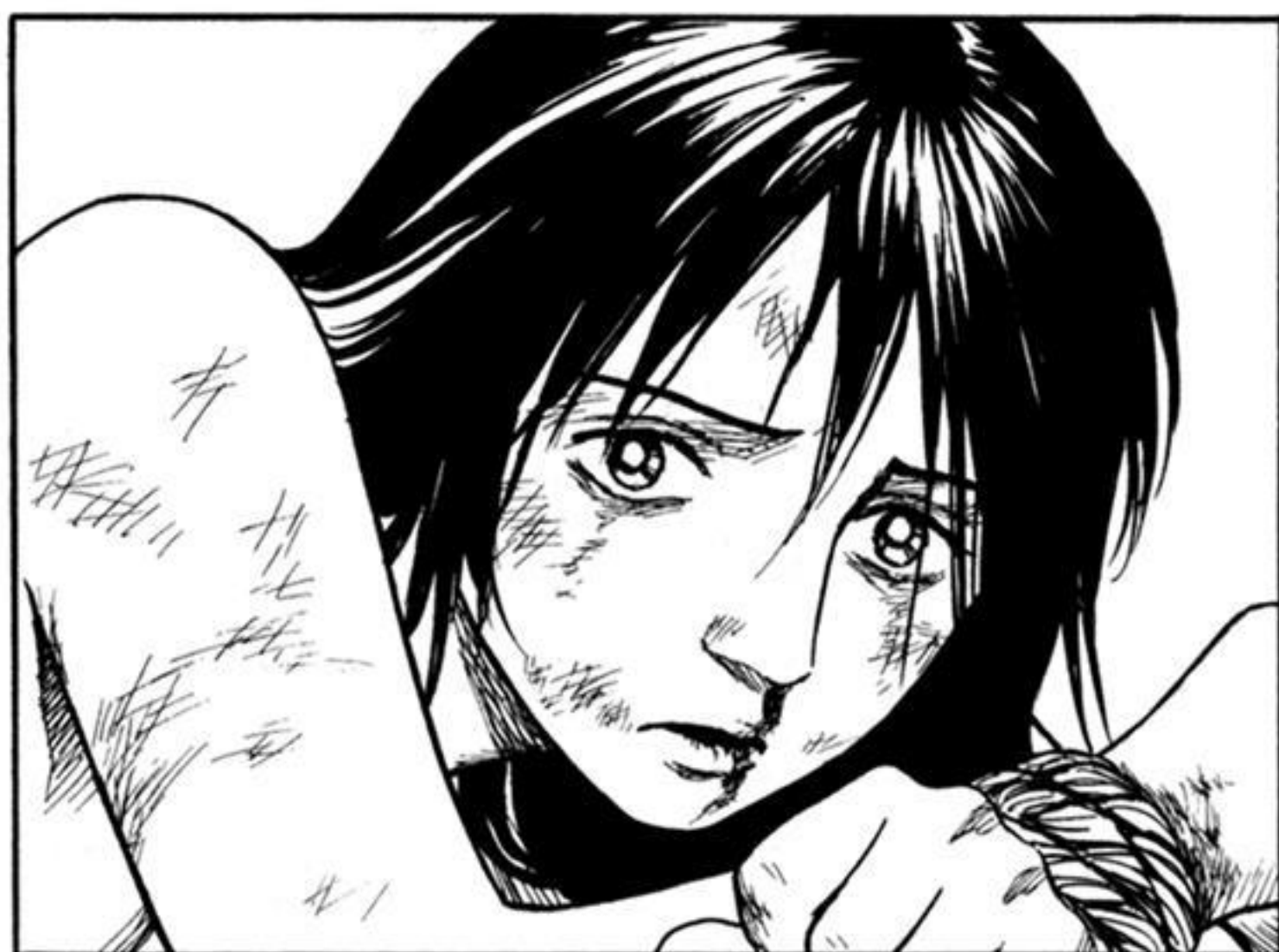


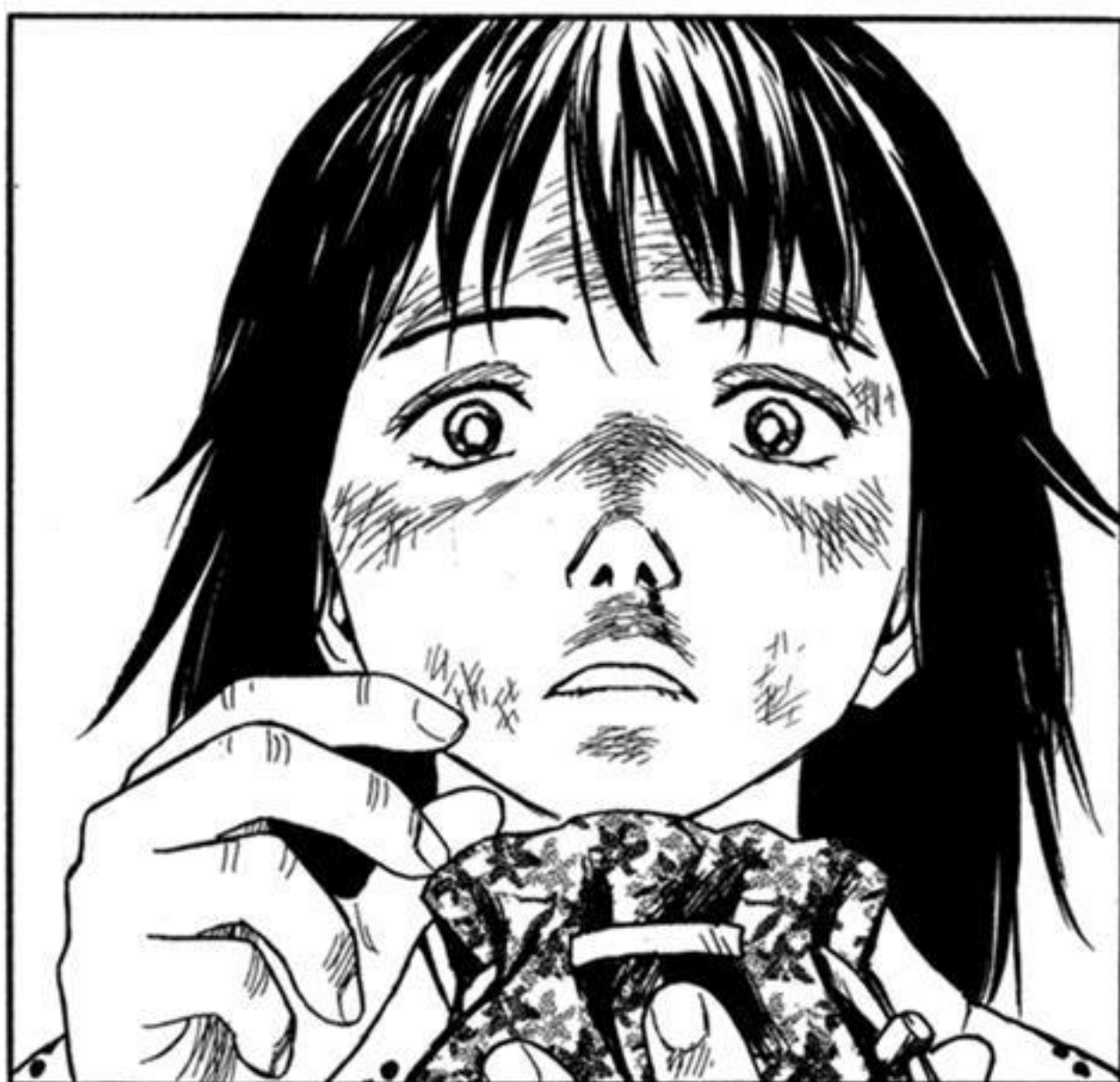
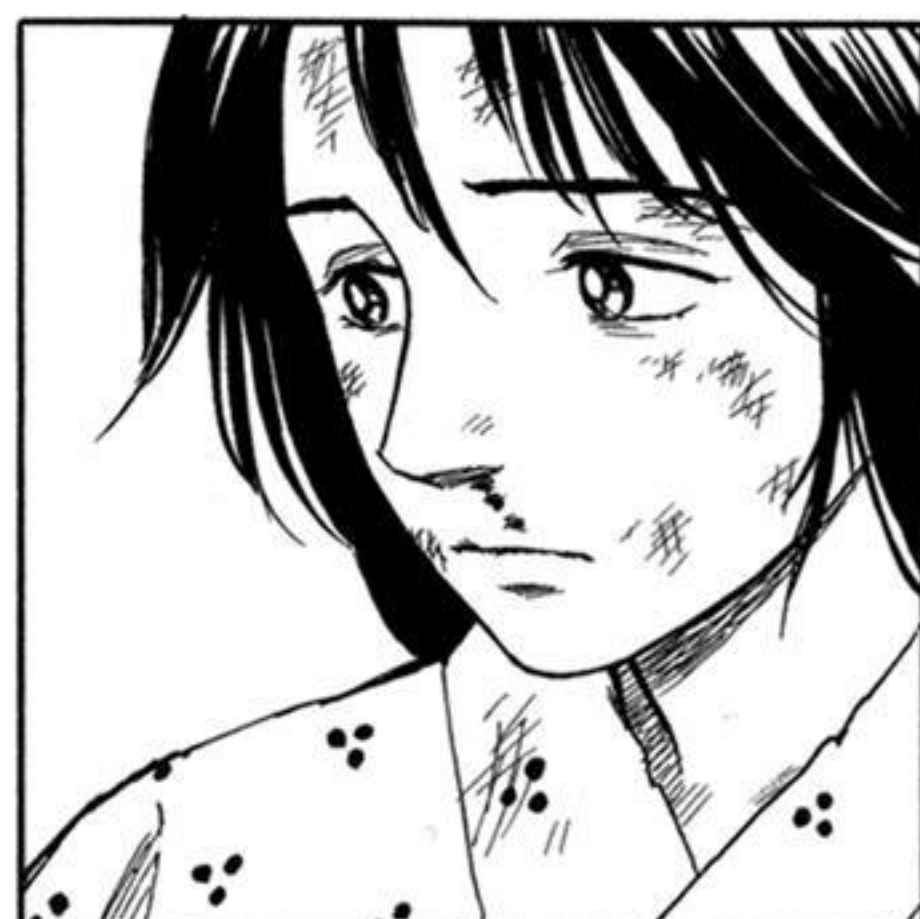
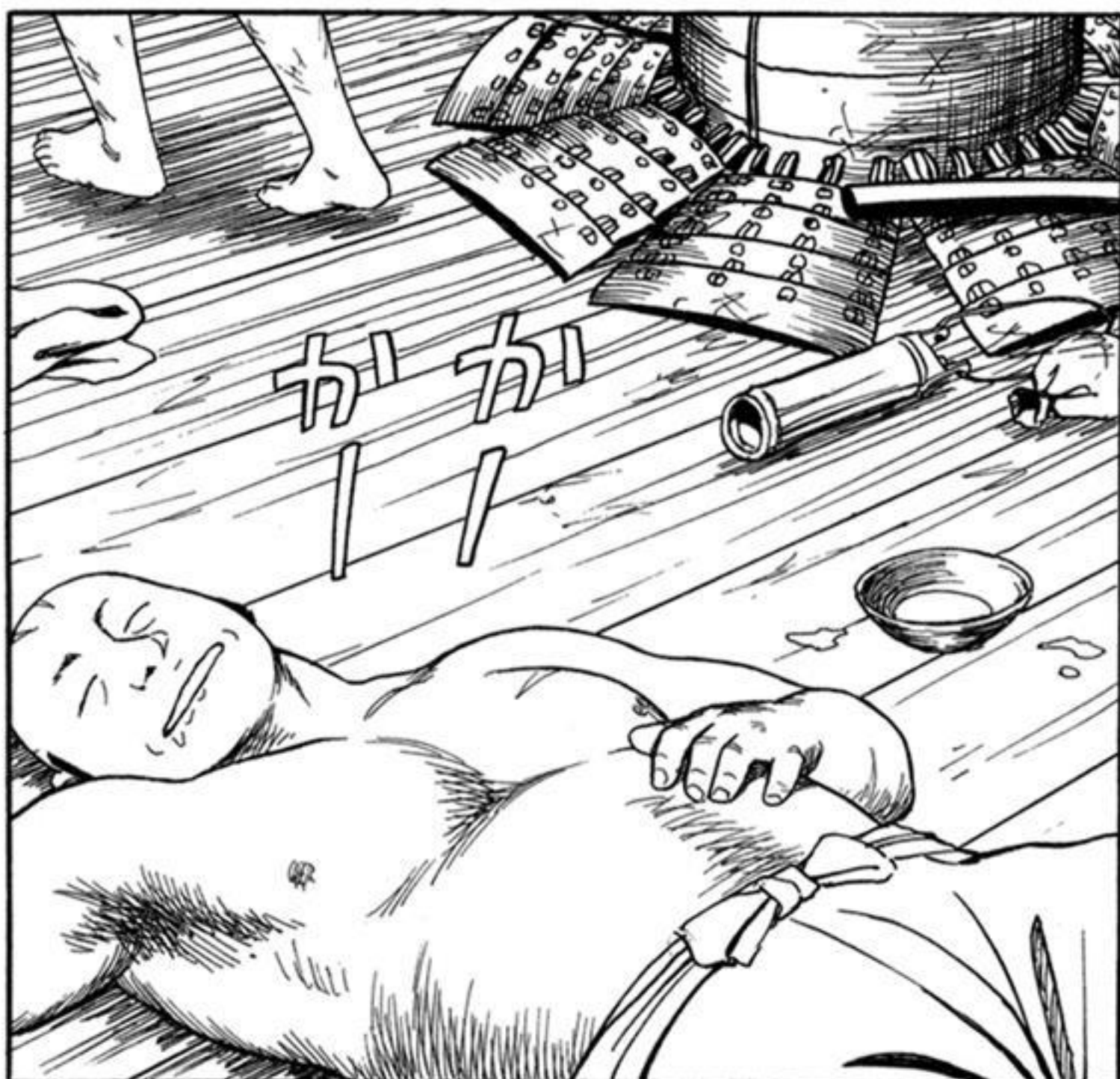




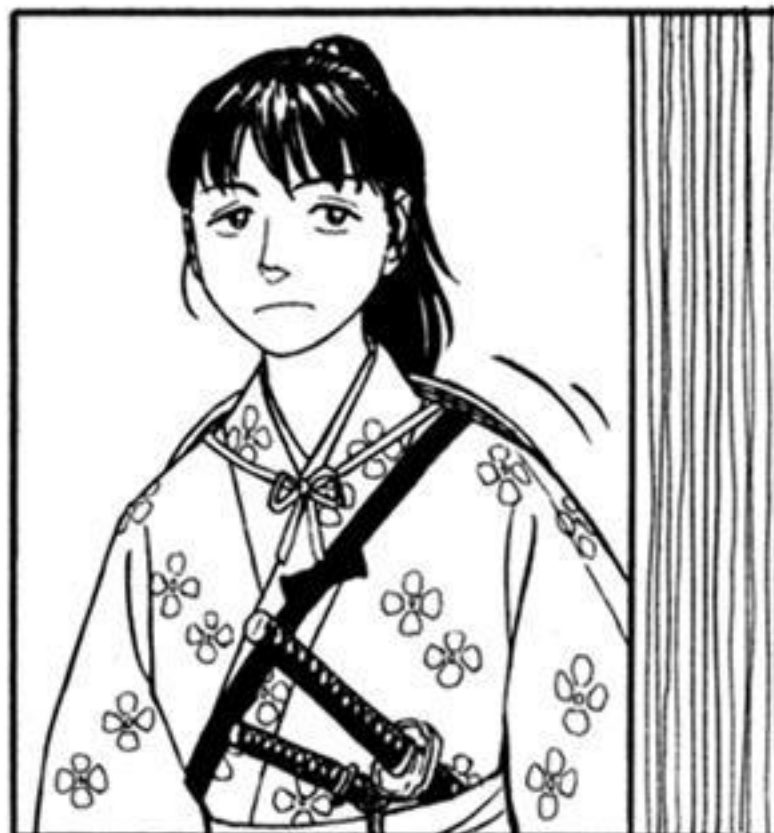




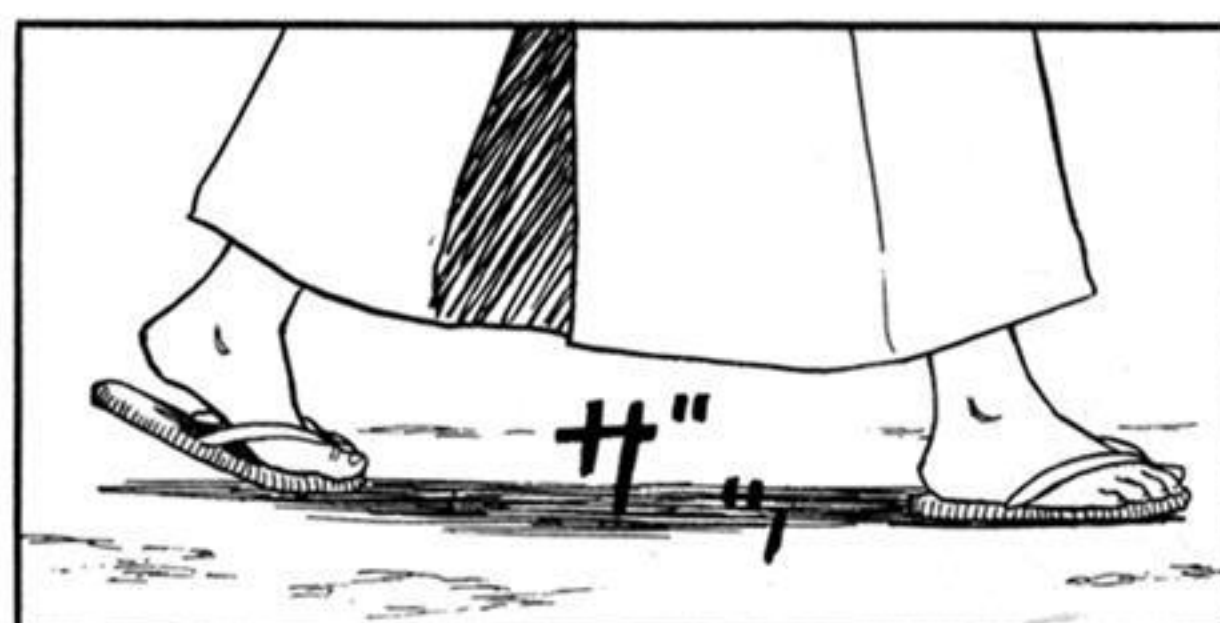














*the -suke ending denotes a male name





Umm, wait—



Sweet name ya got.

Kanra... Harunosuke...

A sweet and pleasant spring, eh?

*Kan in Kanra and Haru in Harunosuke respectively mean "sweet" and "spring."



Ah, well... My apologies.



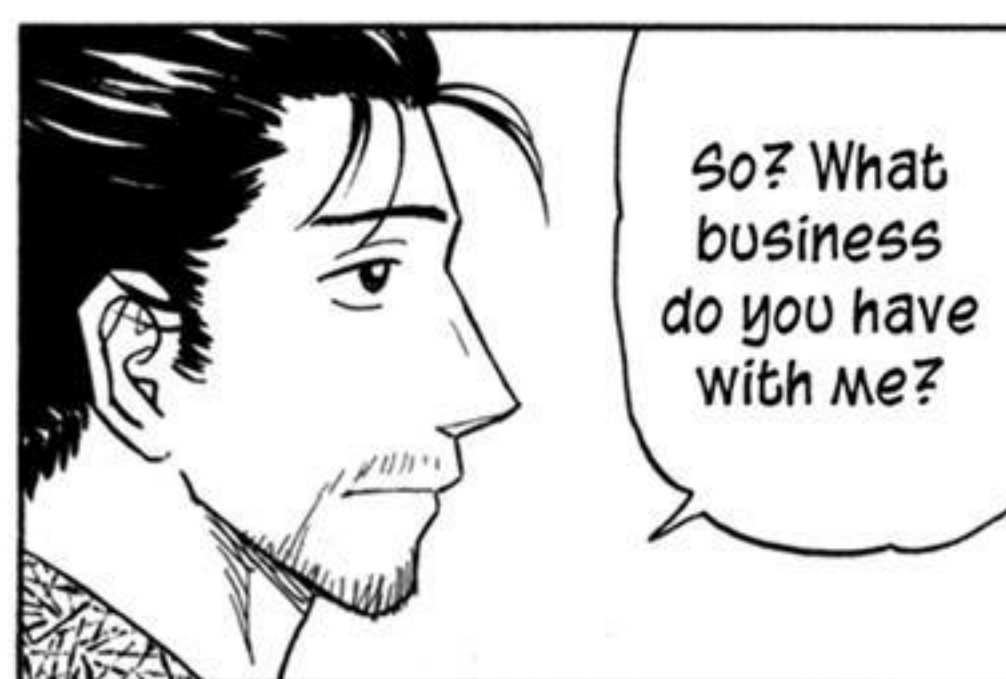
You can't just go around making jokes with people's names!

Now isn't that a bit rude?



Please teach me the 43, "Sound, simple, and striking swordsmanship!"

Wha!?



So? What business do you have with me?



O-Oh right! Hikita! ...sama!

*-sama: respectful honorific, usually for those of higher social standing than the speaker



Of course,
you will be
handsomely
paid.



I simply
wish to learn
some basic but
still effective
swordsmanship
techniques!

Like
that even
exists! Can't
believe you
even made
a stupid
nickname
for it.



I'll give
you a whole
bag of 'em
if you teach
me sword-
manship.



Goishikin
coins!?!
Is this
real...?



How's
this?

*Gold coins used in the Sengoku period whose shape resembled stone pieces in go (go-ishi), hence the name goishikin (kin means gold)



**What!?!
I beg
of you,
master!**

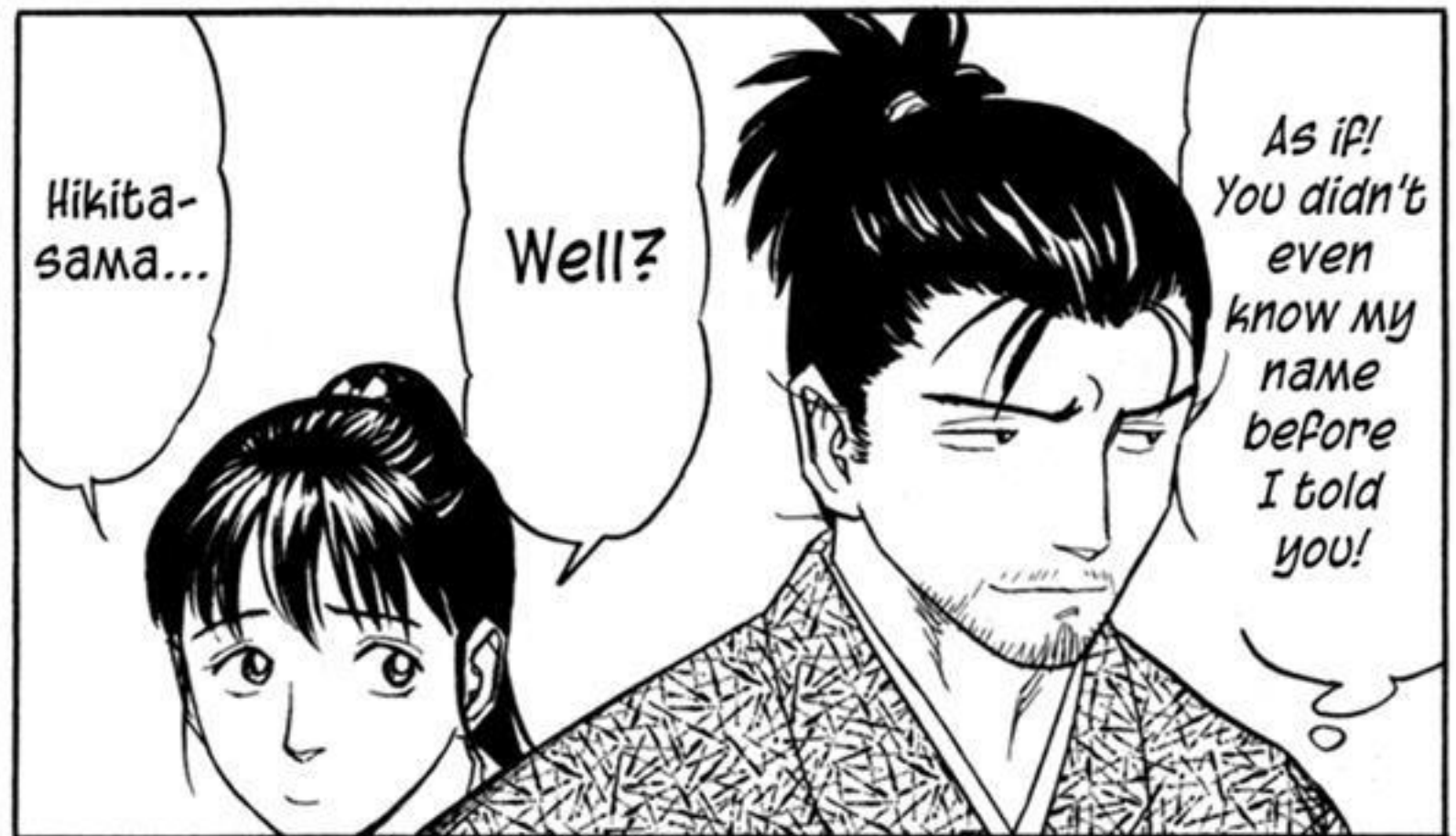


There will be
war soon but...
I must admit I
would like even
a little more gold
before then...



I de-
cline.

No—





With that much gold, a girl like you can peacefully live out her days somewhere safe.

Understand? I won't make any harsh judgments but you better throw away any bold desires.

...



So you see, I just don't have the time to politely teach a young girl how to wield a blade.



And that's not even my main point!

Well, duh! Who wouldn't!?

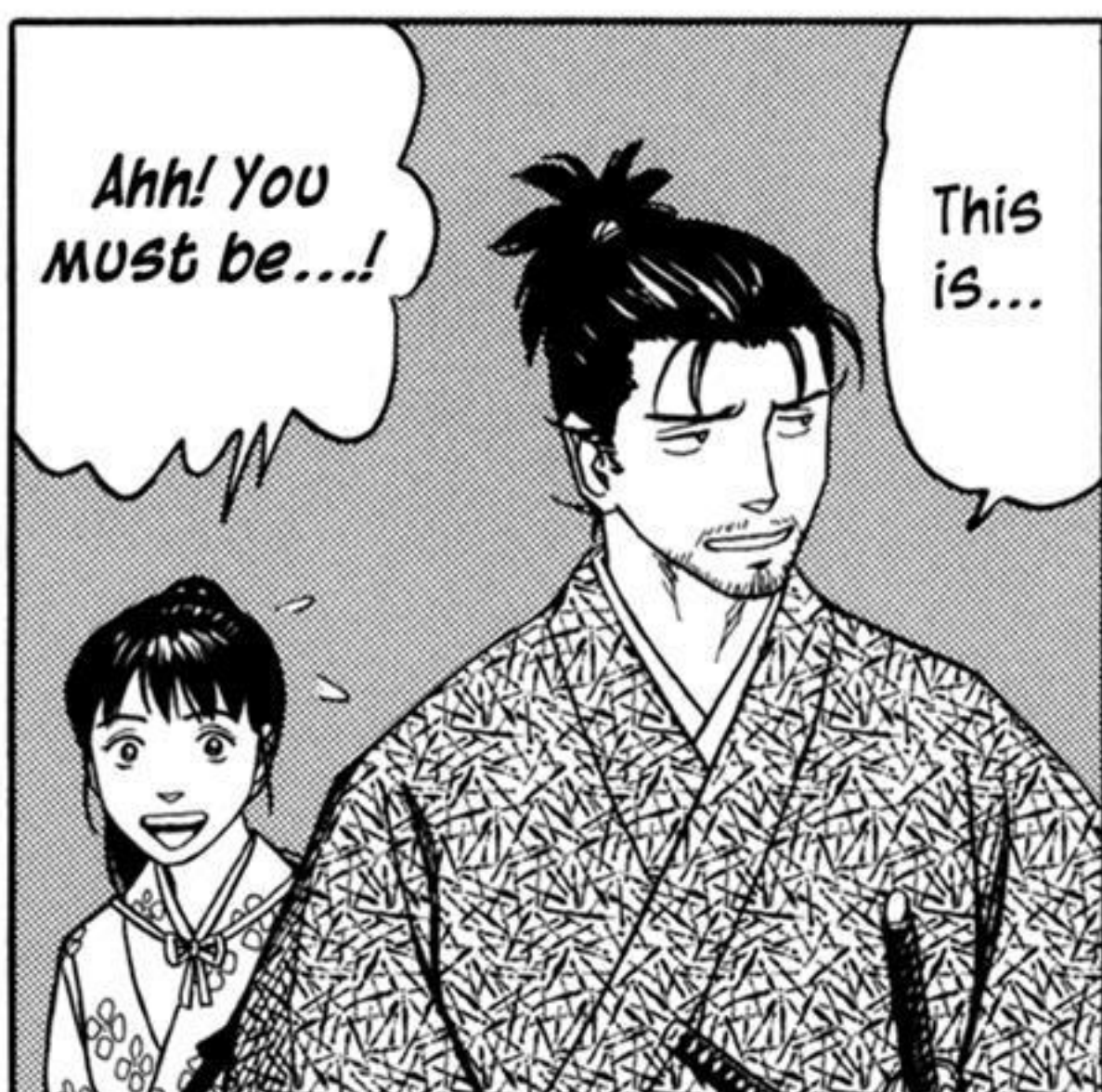
You realized I was a girl right away...

As expected of a master...



As...







You have an excellent eye, then!



Oh, so you'll settle for me...!?

Pretty impudent if you ask me!

Yes, I thought it would be rather impudent to ask you to teach me so I...



The world's best!?



He may even be the world's best already...



I may be biased as his teacher, but Hikita Bungorō has no peer among the pupils of my school!



Bun-sama?

Amazing... Bun-sama...

World's... Best...



As if!

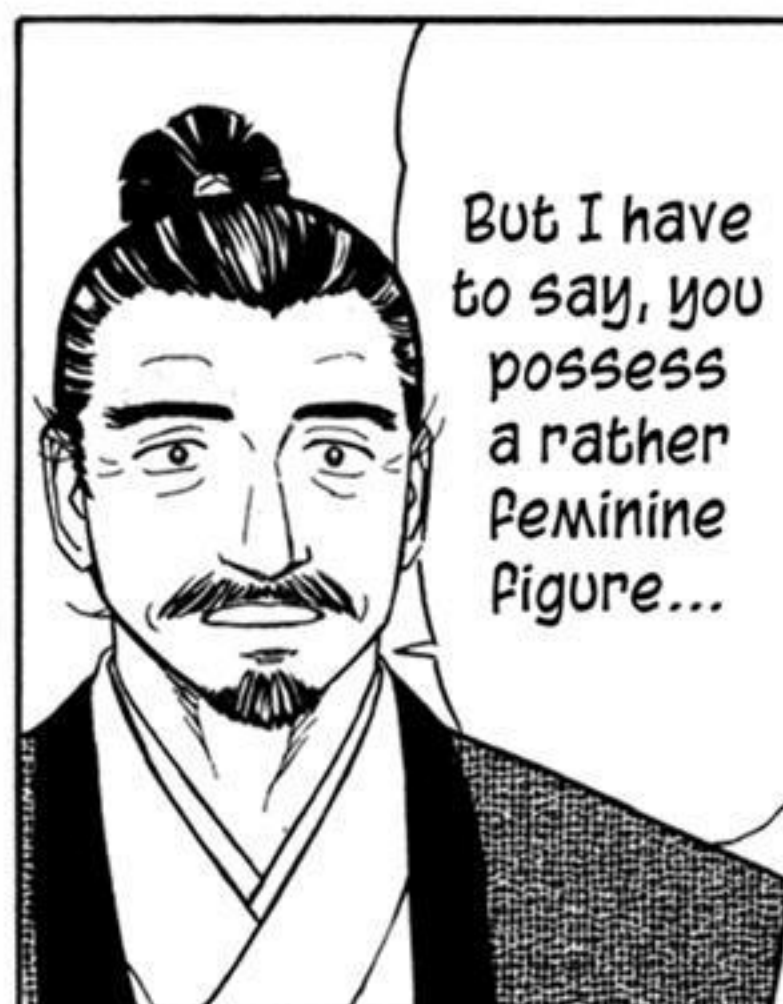


Oh, is that so?



Are you joking, master? She is a girl!

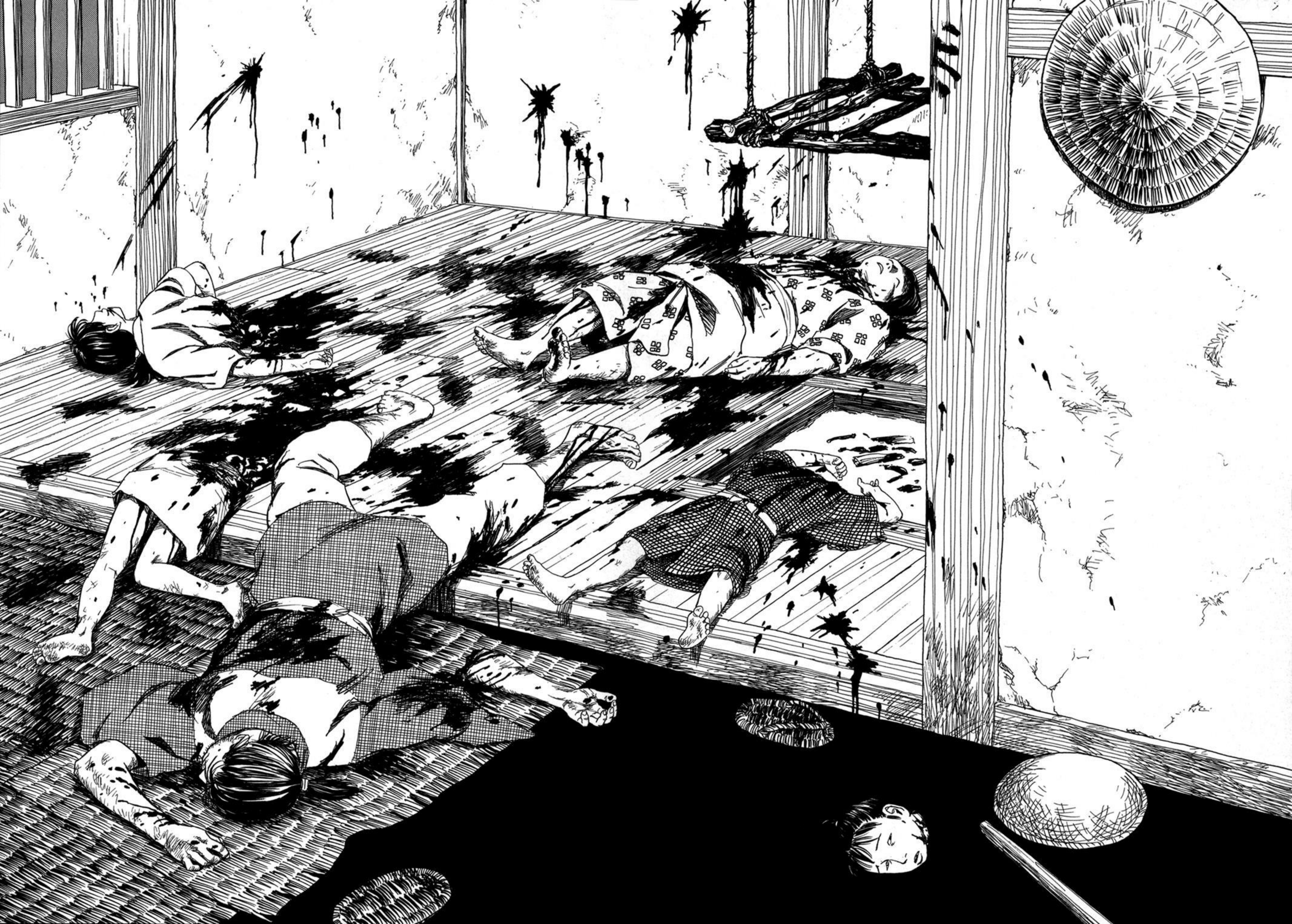
What!?

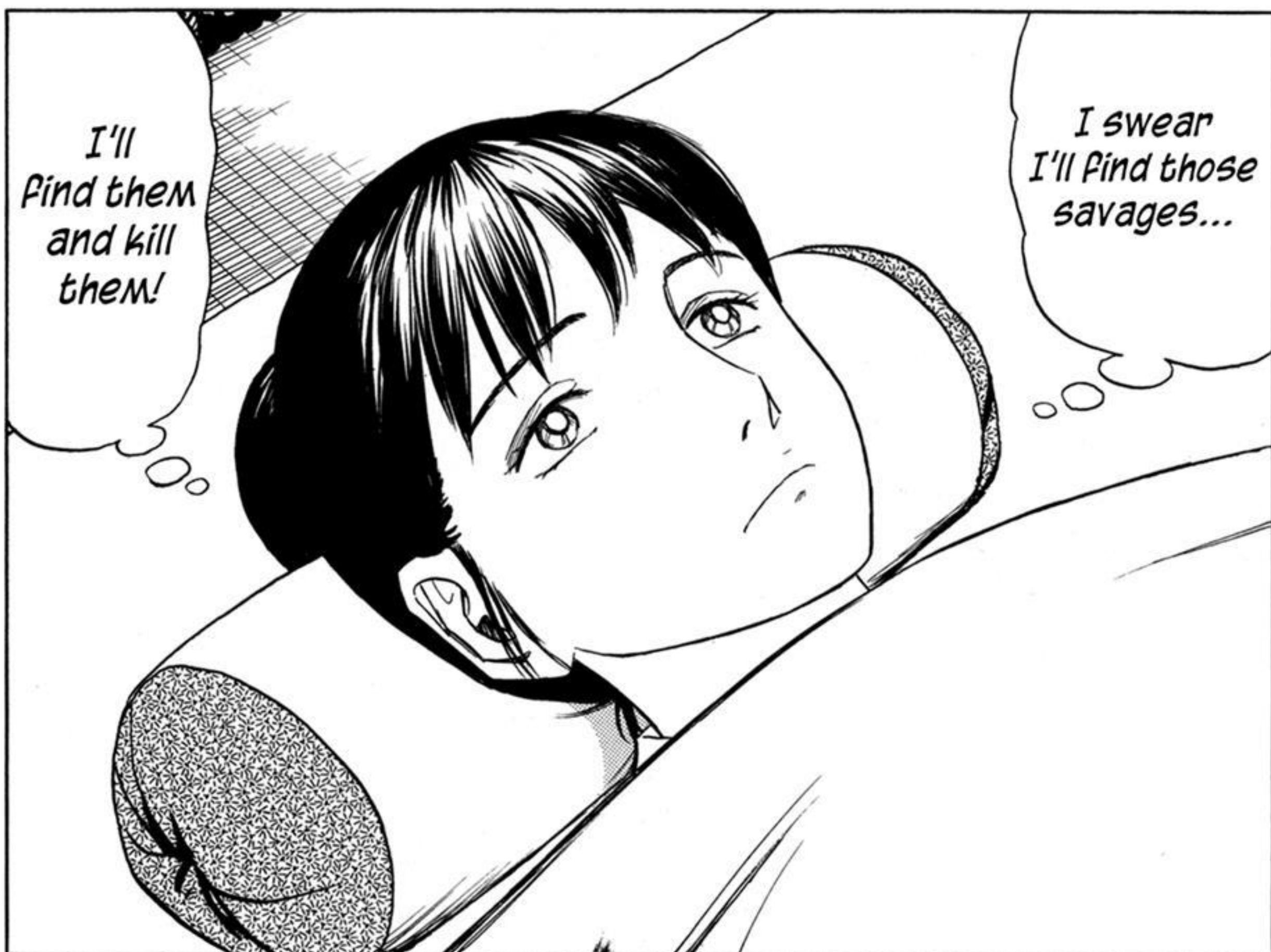


But I have to say, you possess a rather feminine figure...



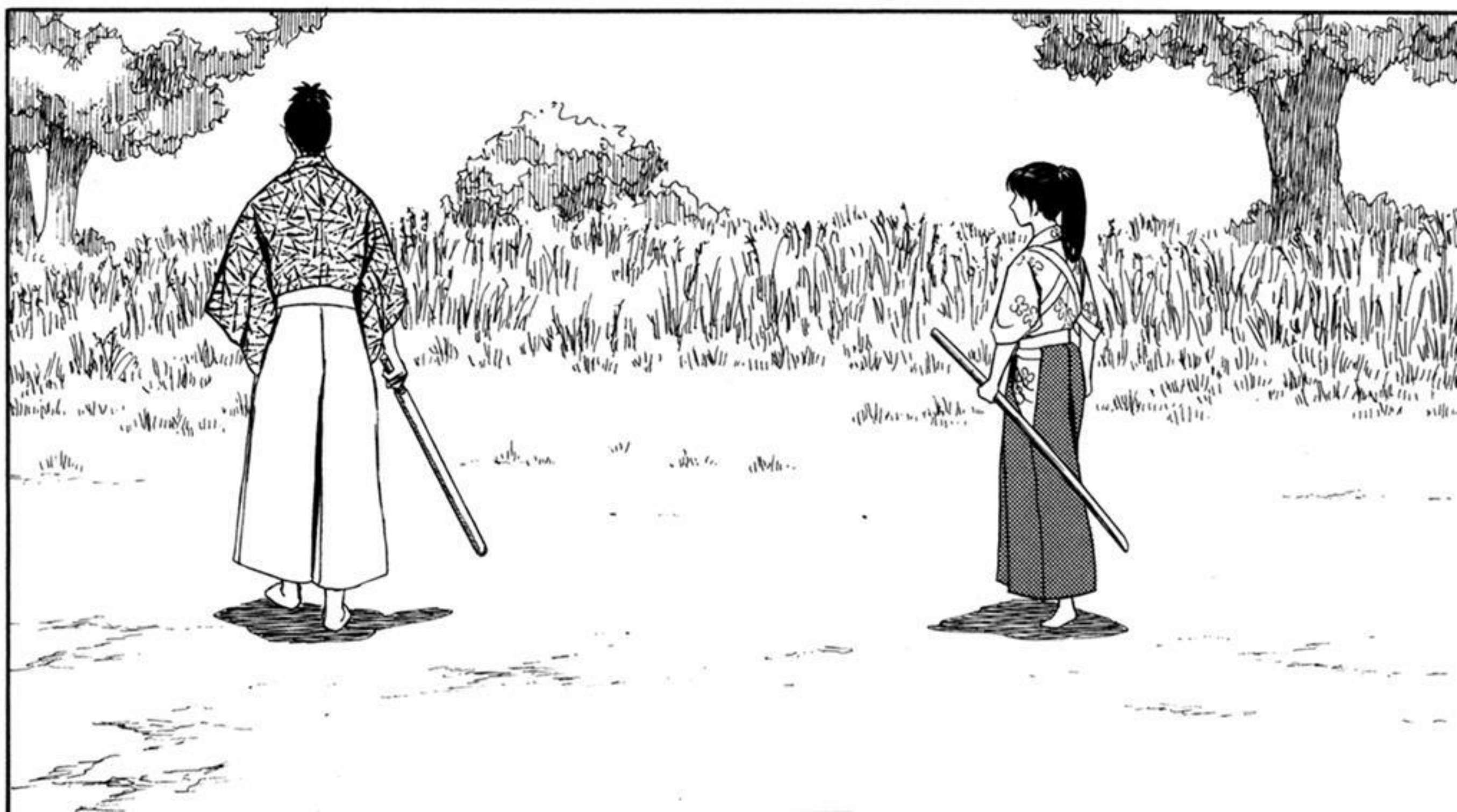






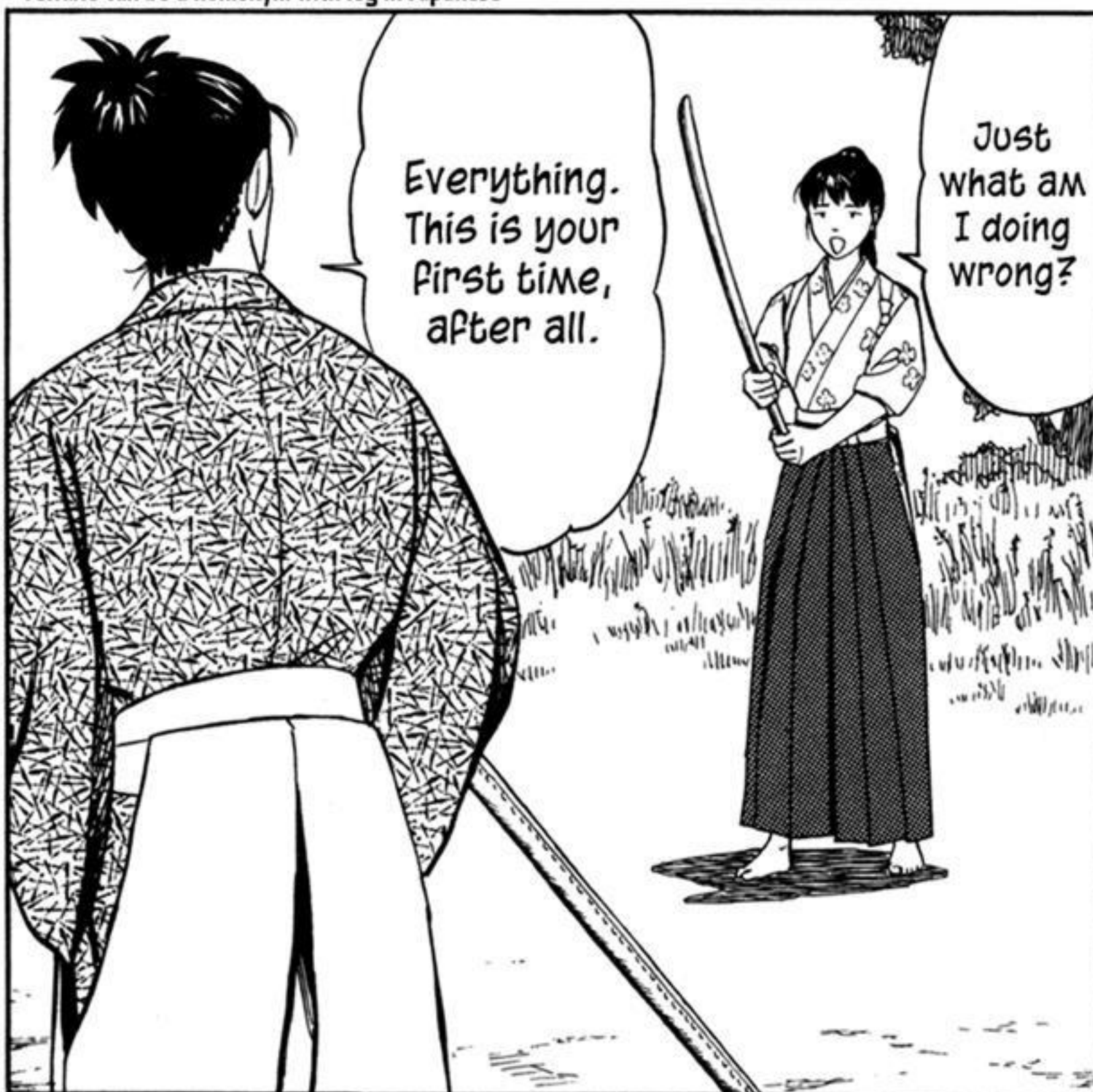
Chapter 2: Pupil

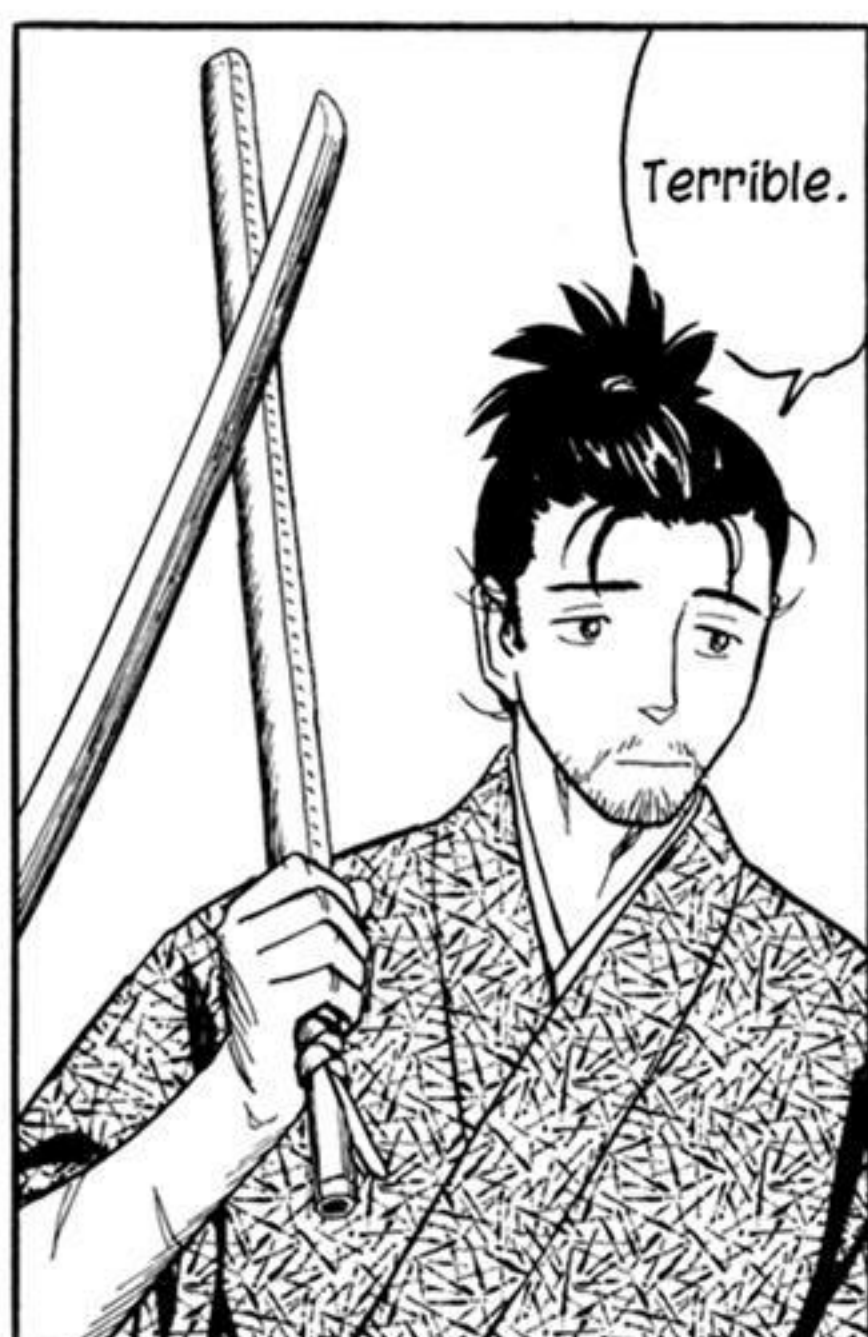




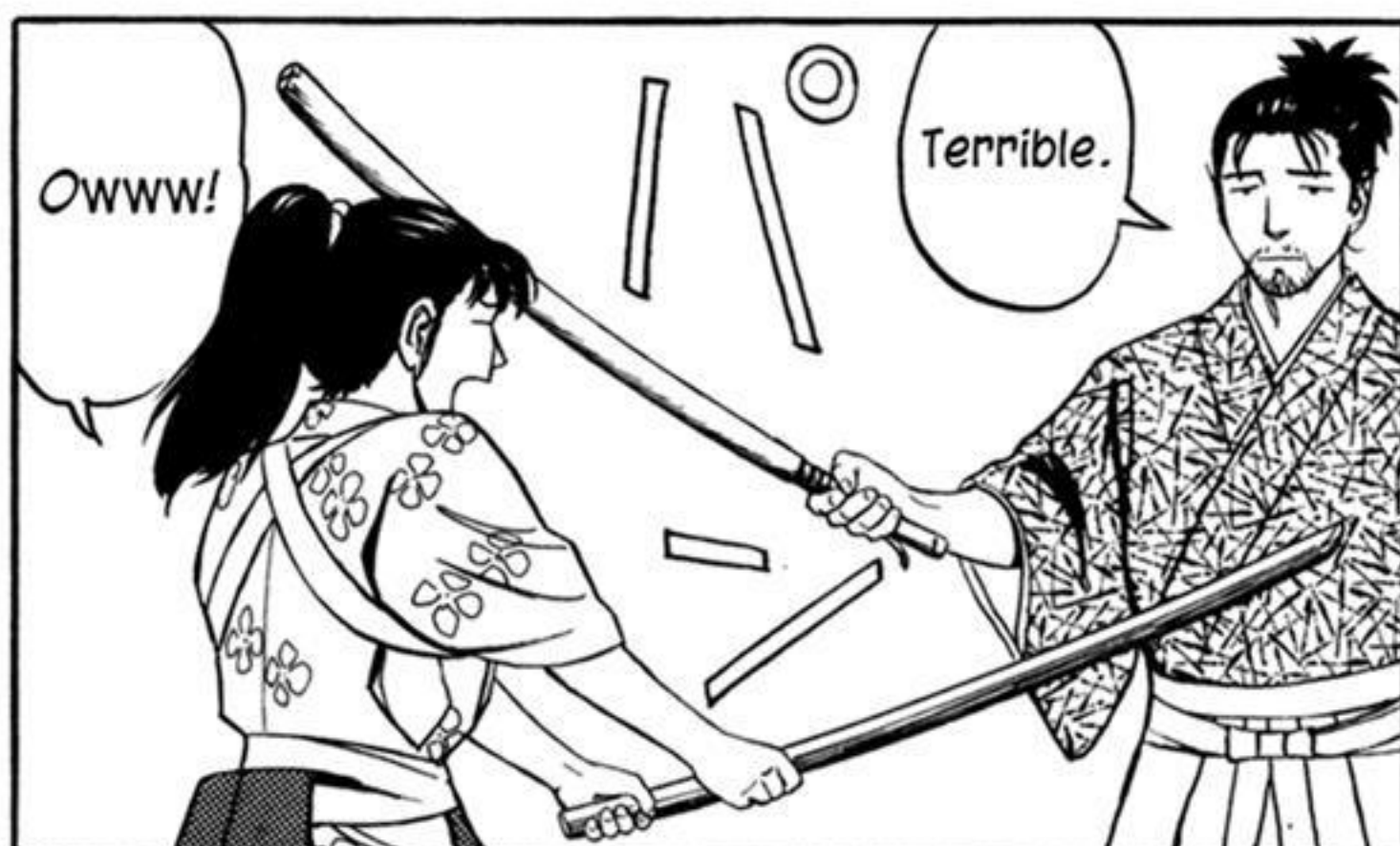


*Terrible can be a homonym with leg in Japanese











It
should
be the
reverse.



...I'm
not
done
yet!



HUFF...
huff...

Far too many
superfluous
movements...
and too much
energy exerted
on a single
stroke.



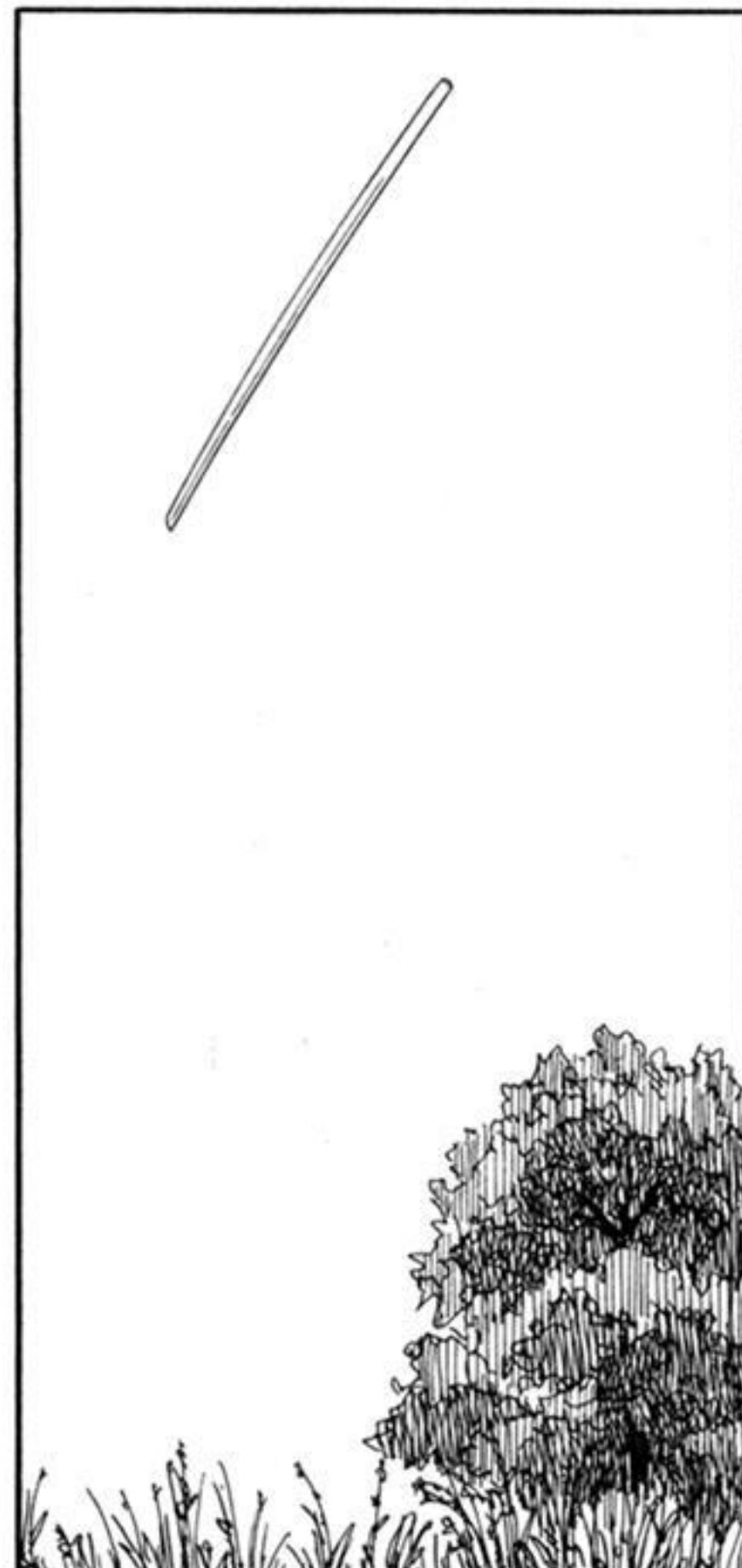
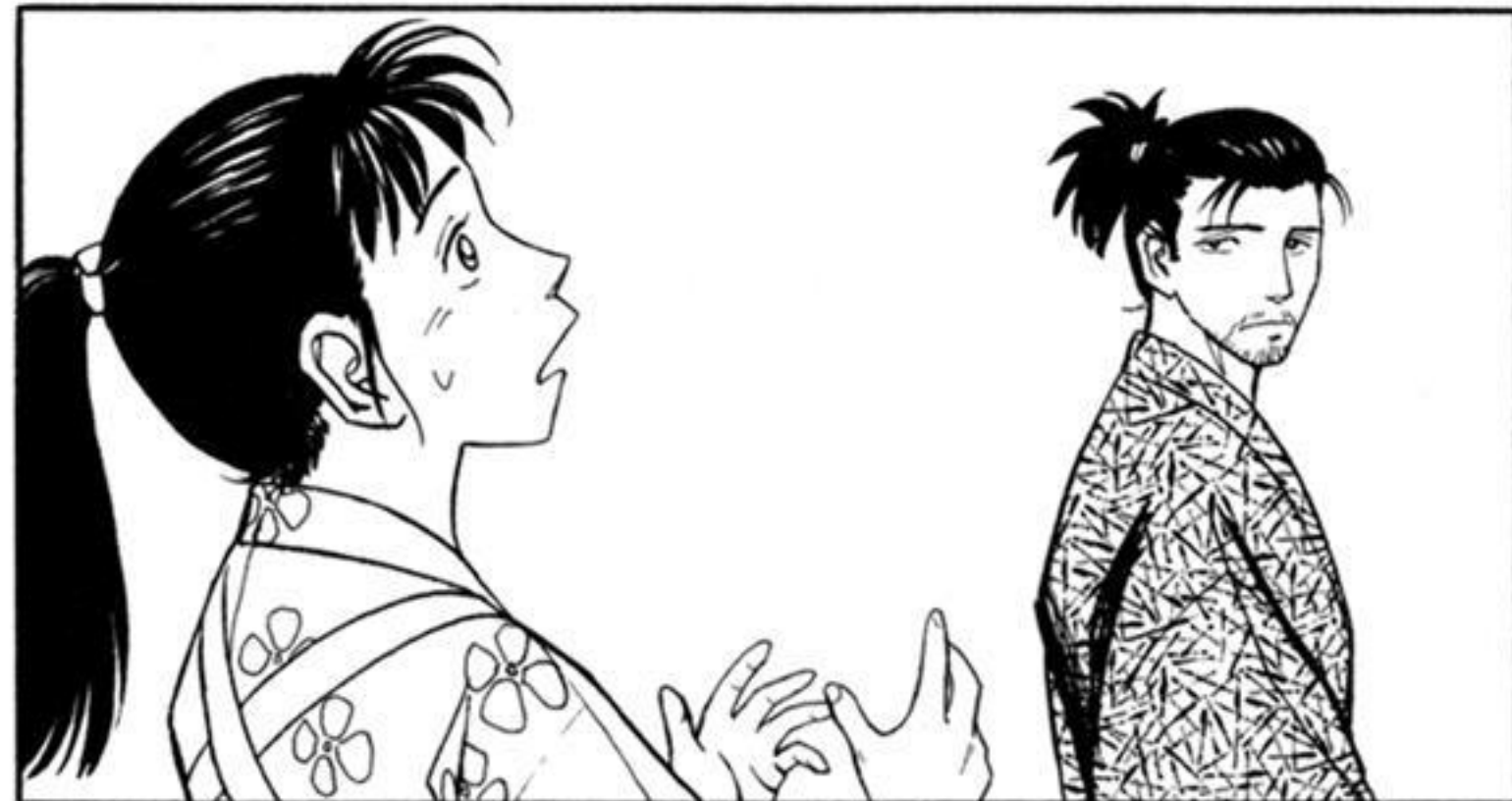
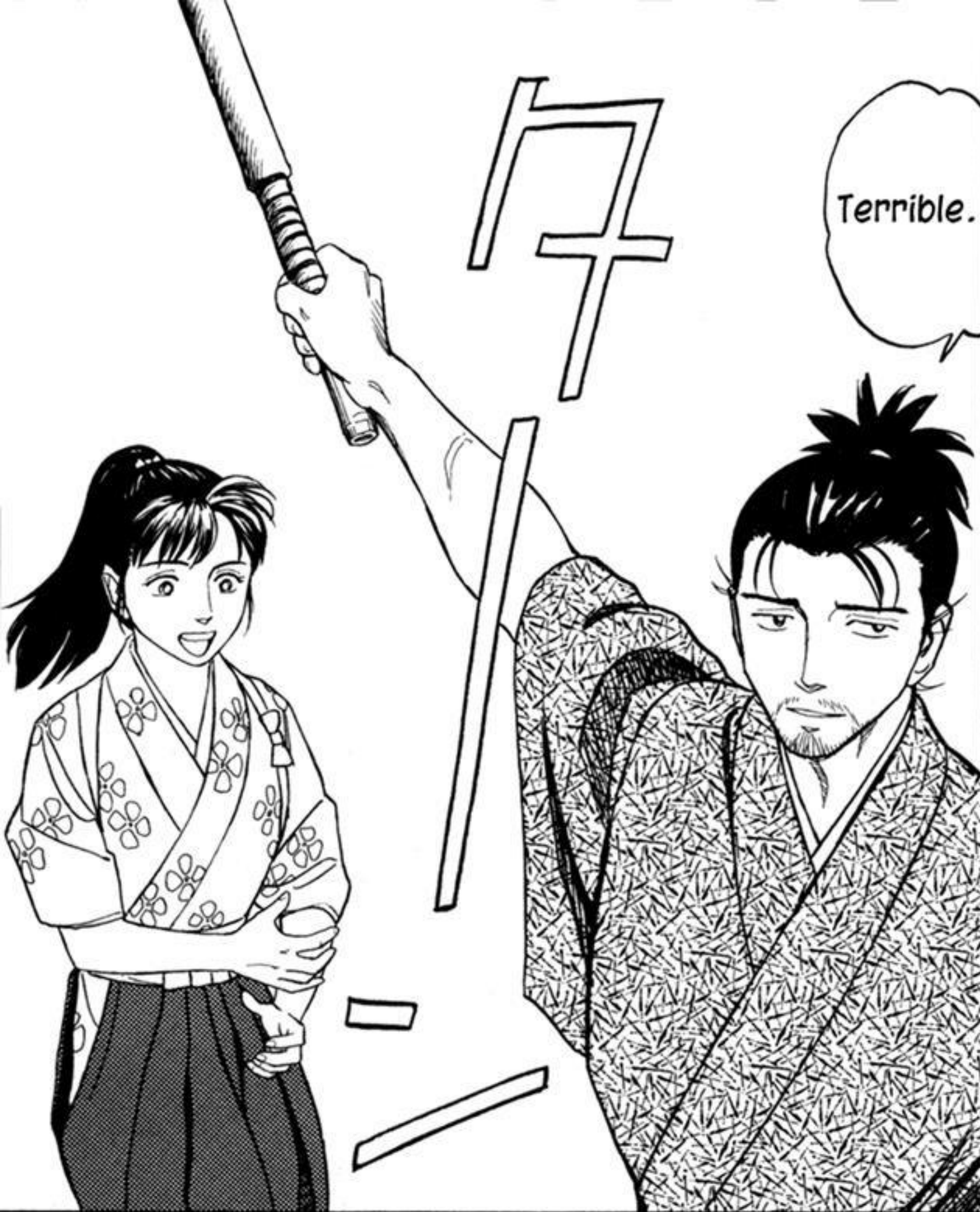
I'd love
to switch
places
with him,
heehee!

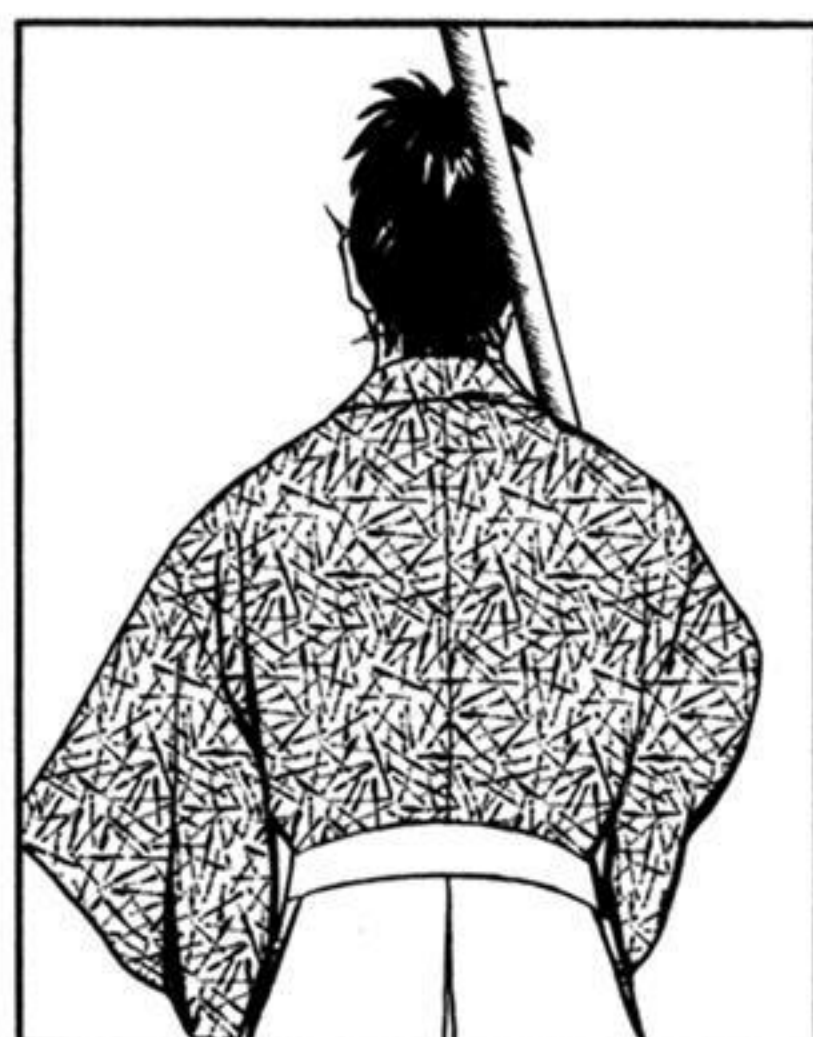
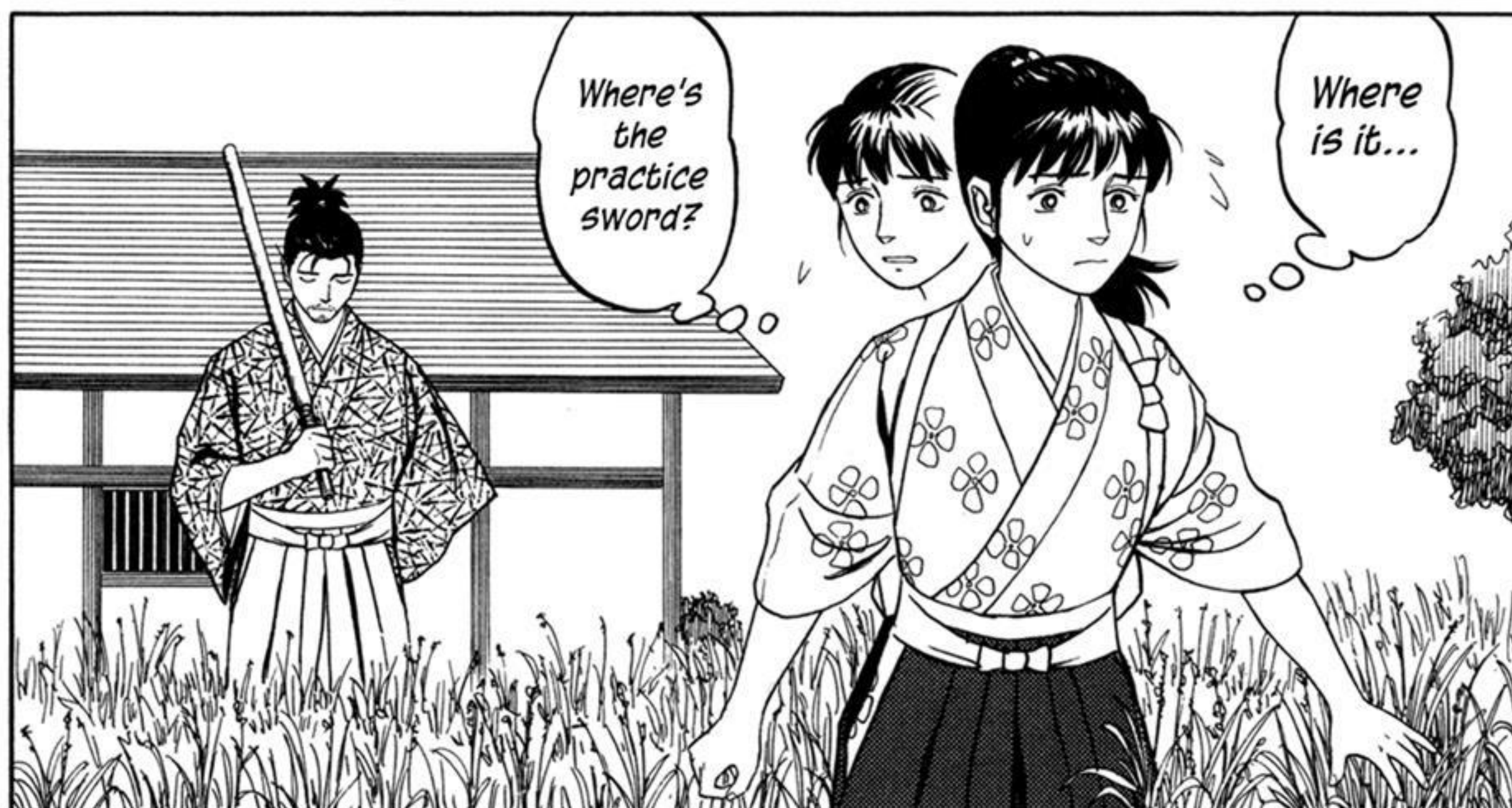


But his
opponent's
a mere girl.
He should at
least go a little
easier on her.

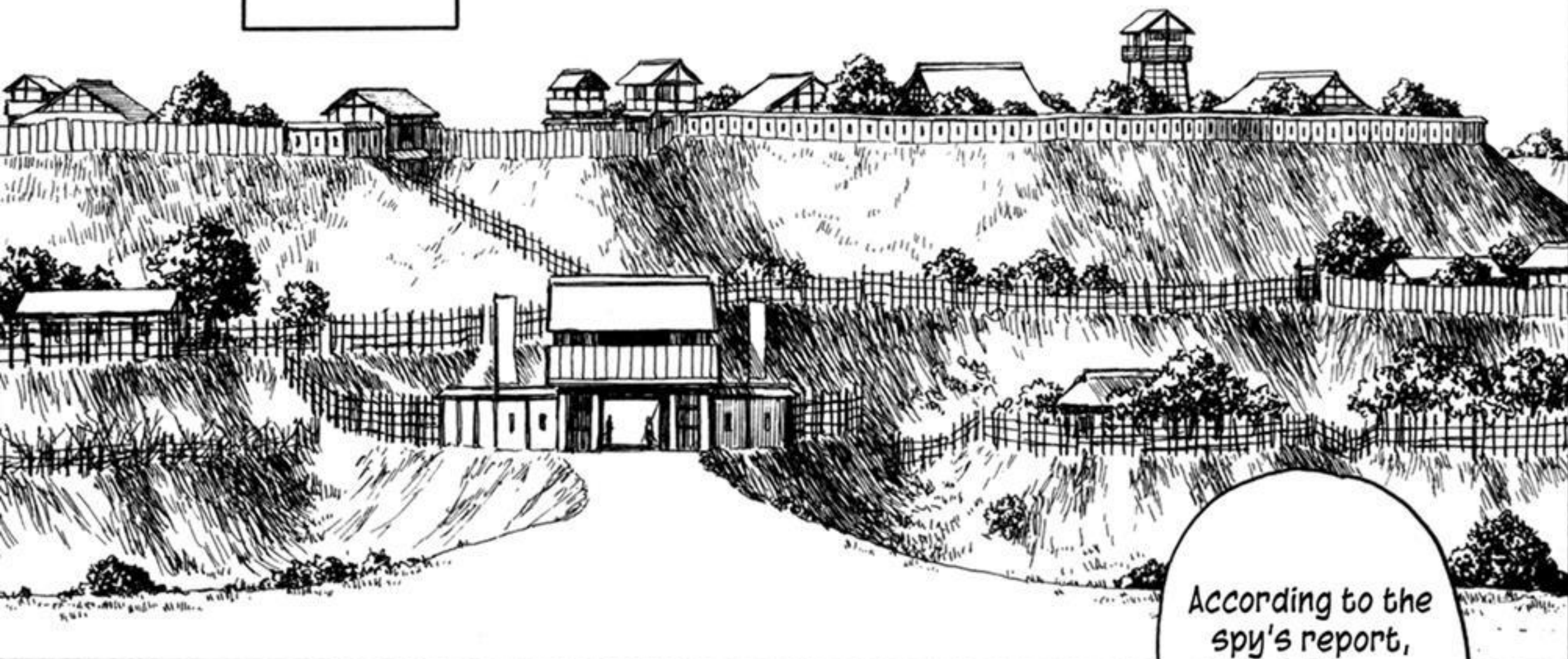
HMM...
Hikita
seems
like he's
having
fun.







Nagano
clan's
Minowa
Castle



According to the
spy's report,
Takeda's army
will number at
20,000.



20,000!?

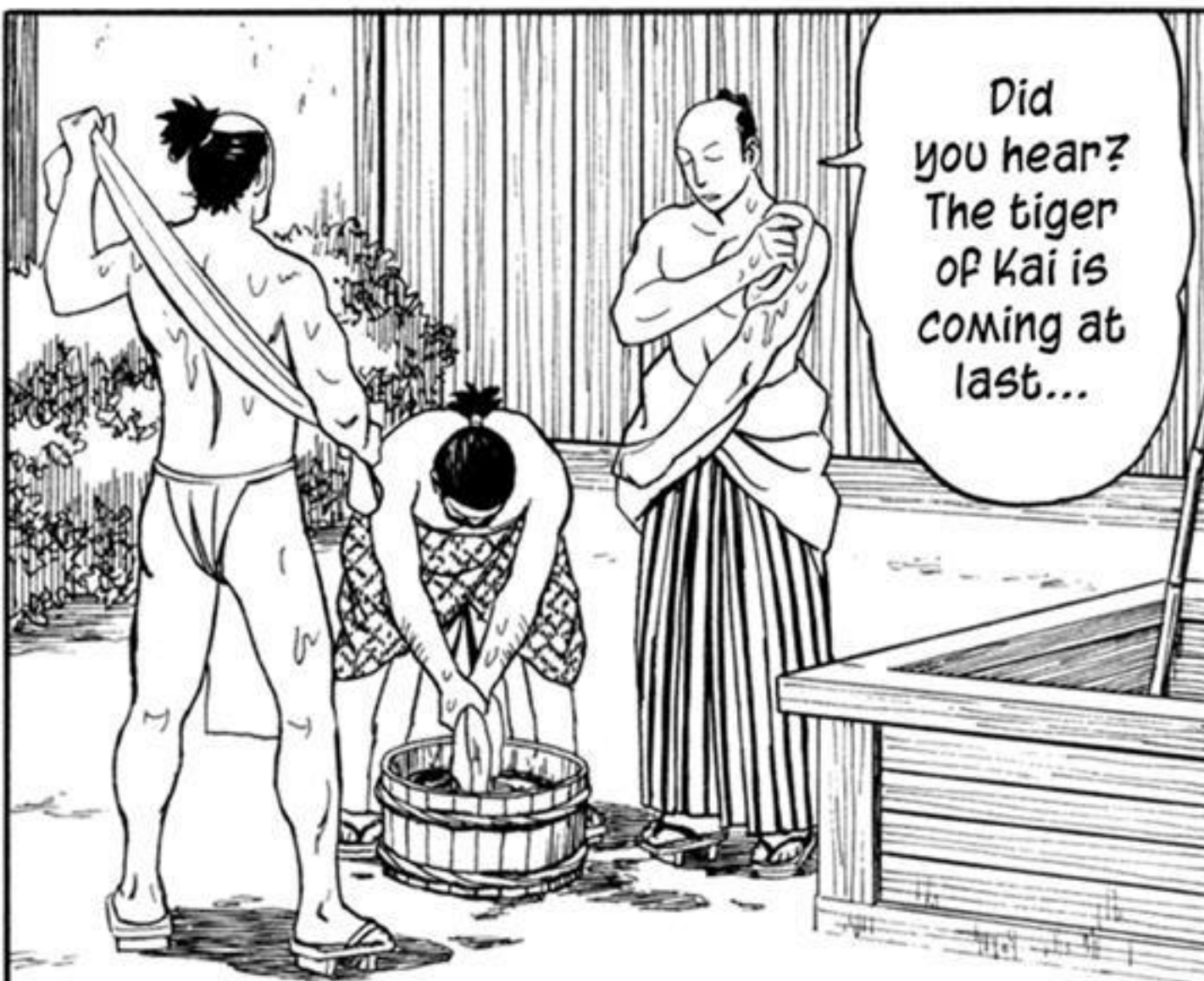
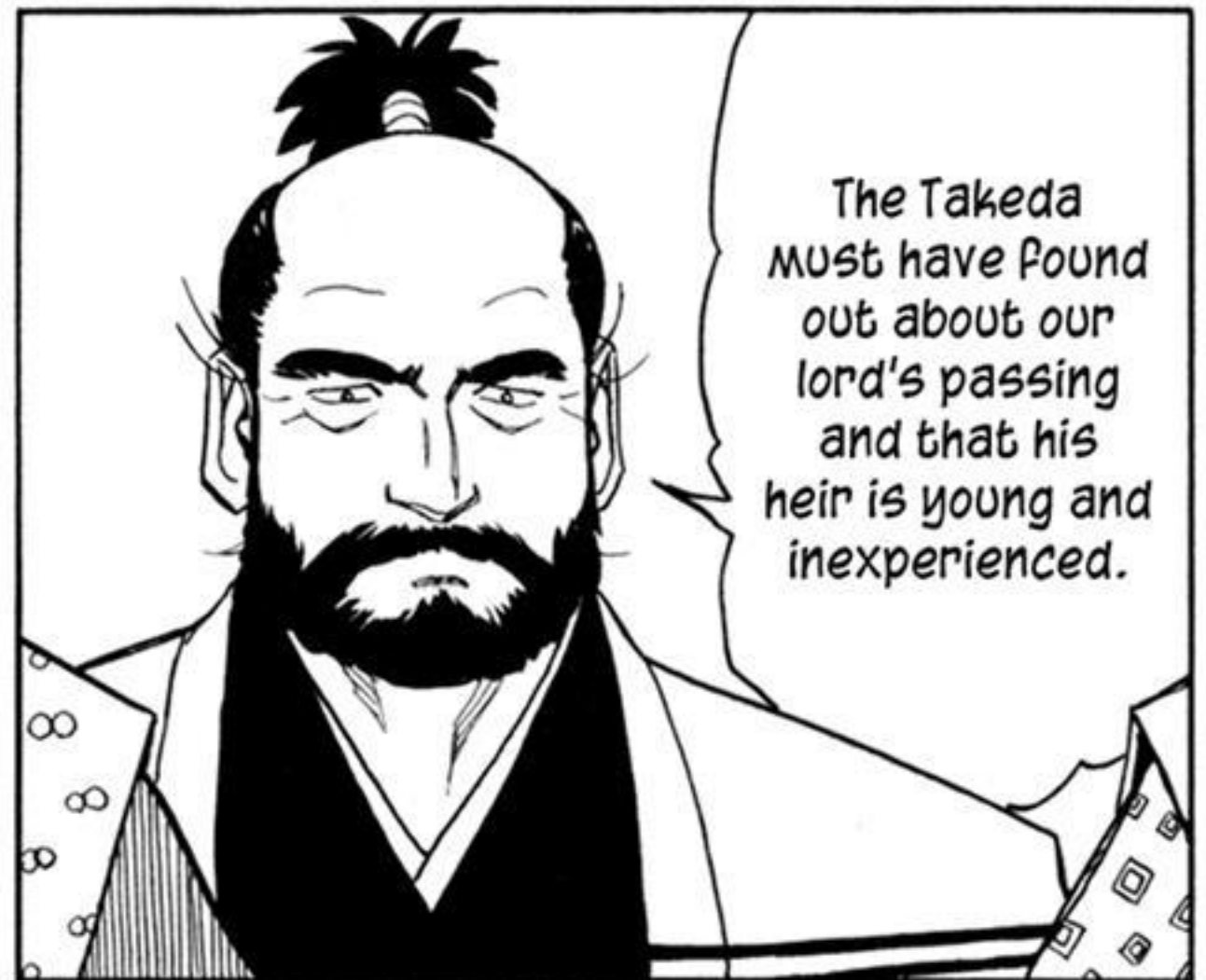
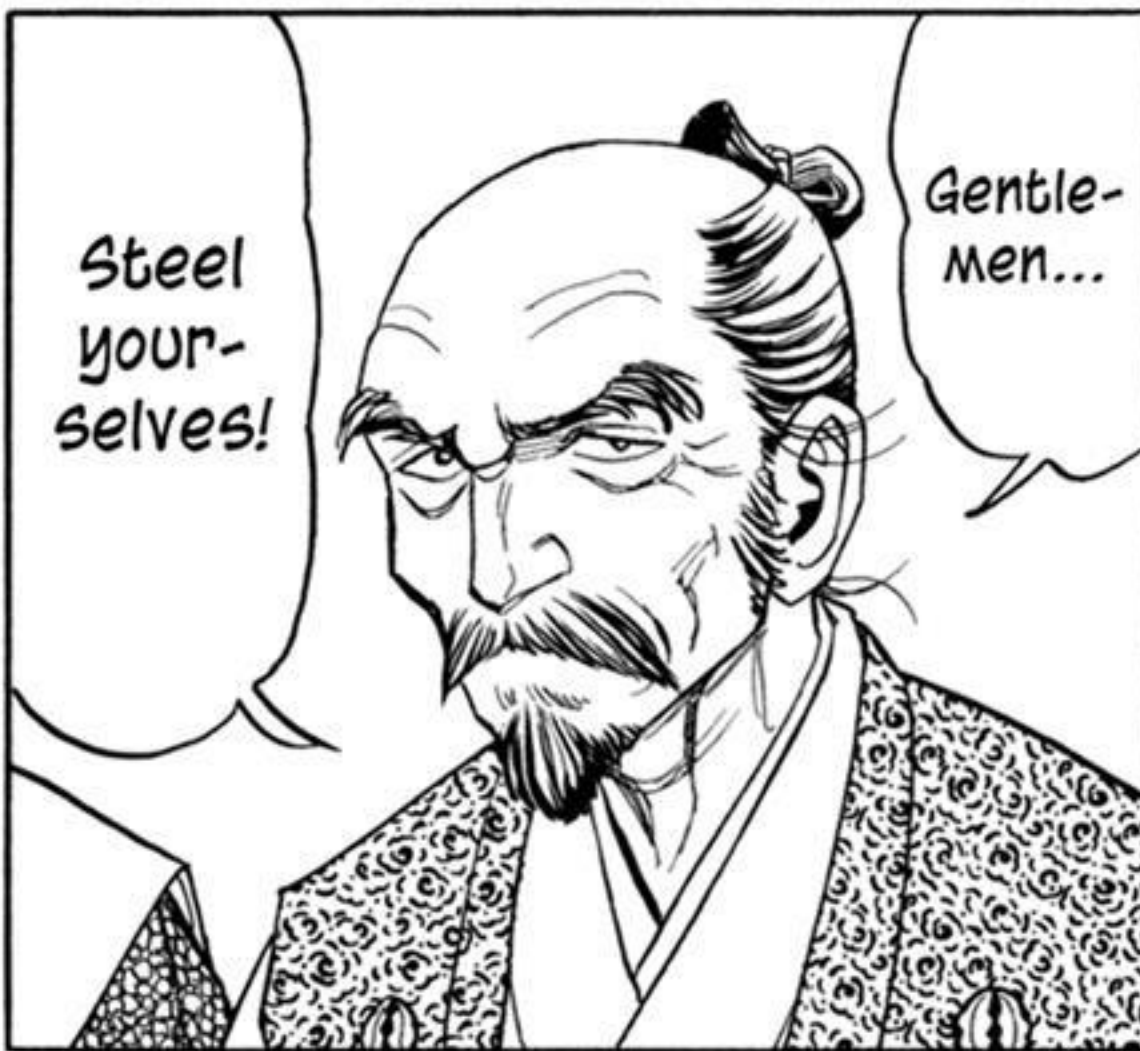


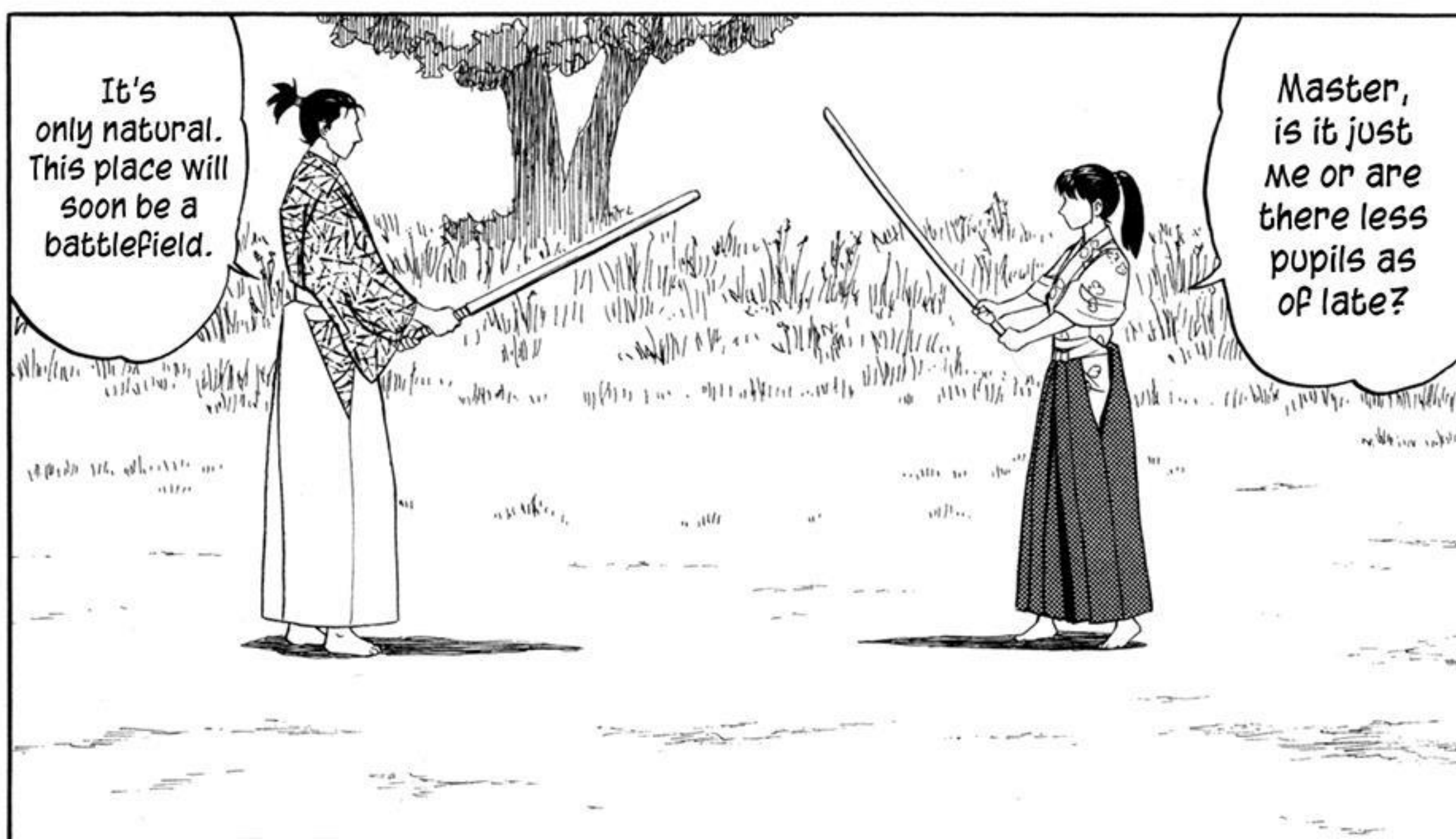
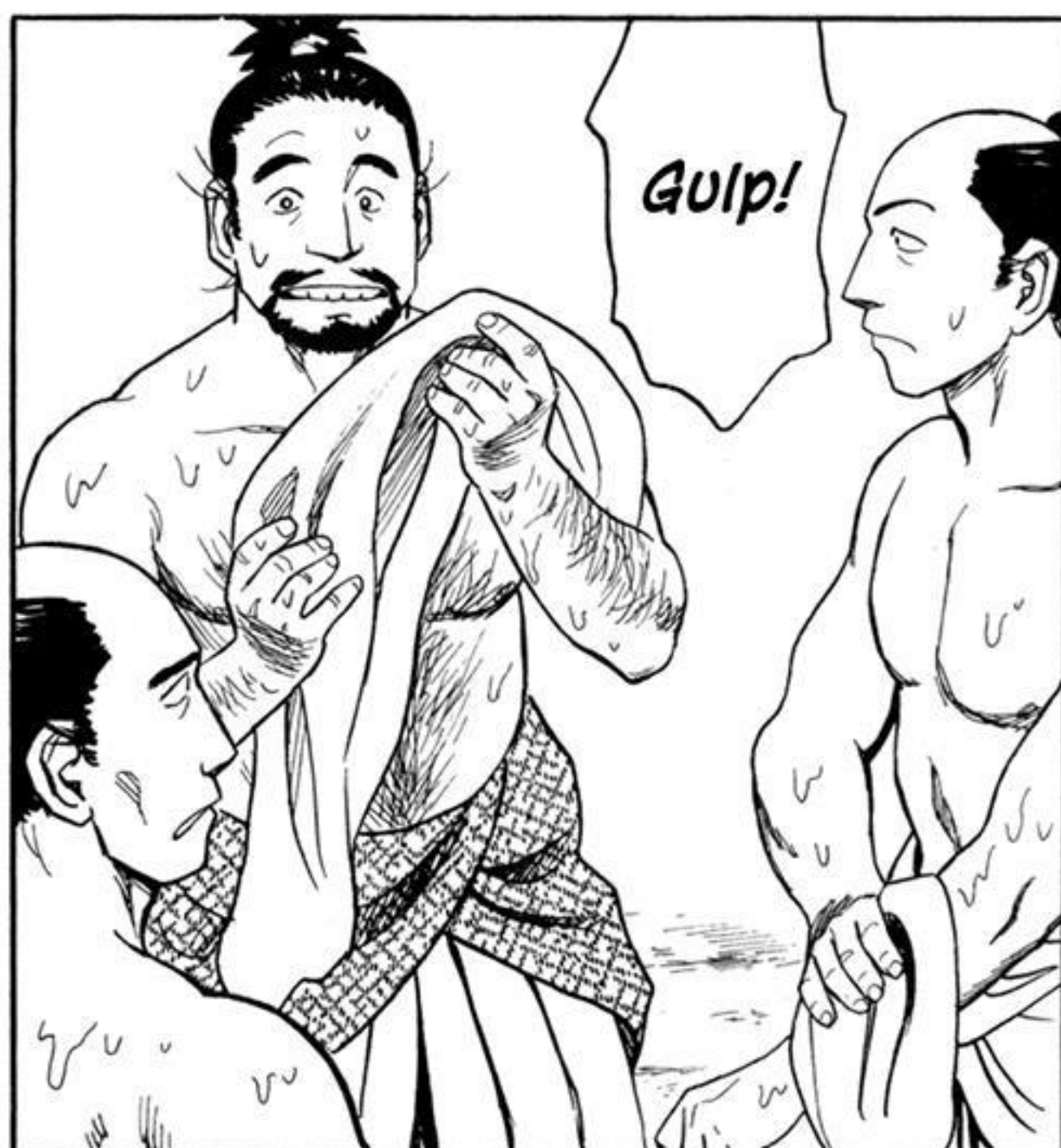
Shingen
himself
will come
here to
Minowa...

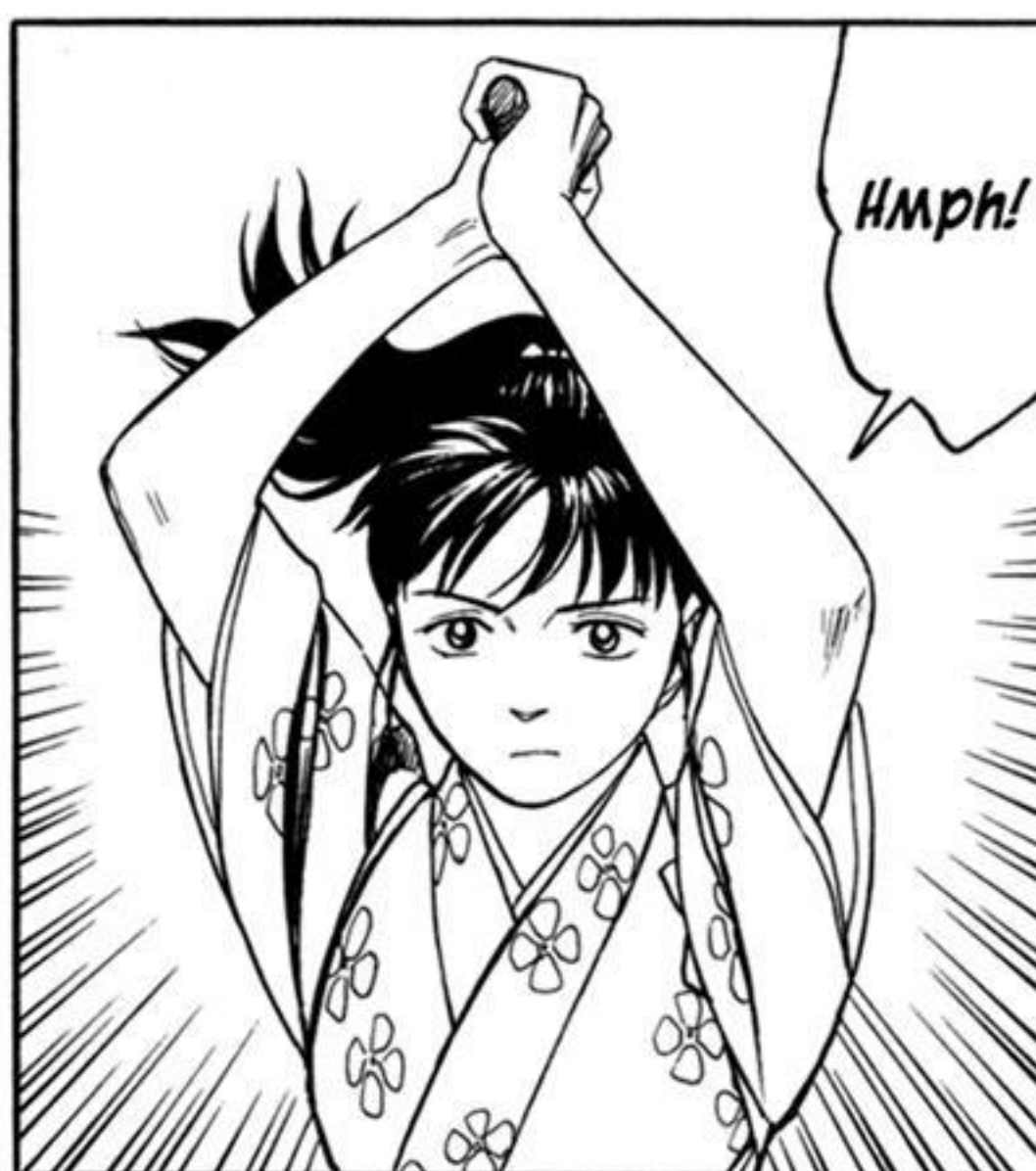
This time,
for sure,



Kamiizumi!

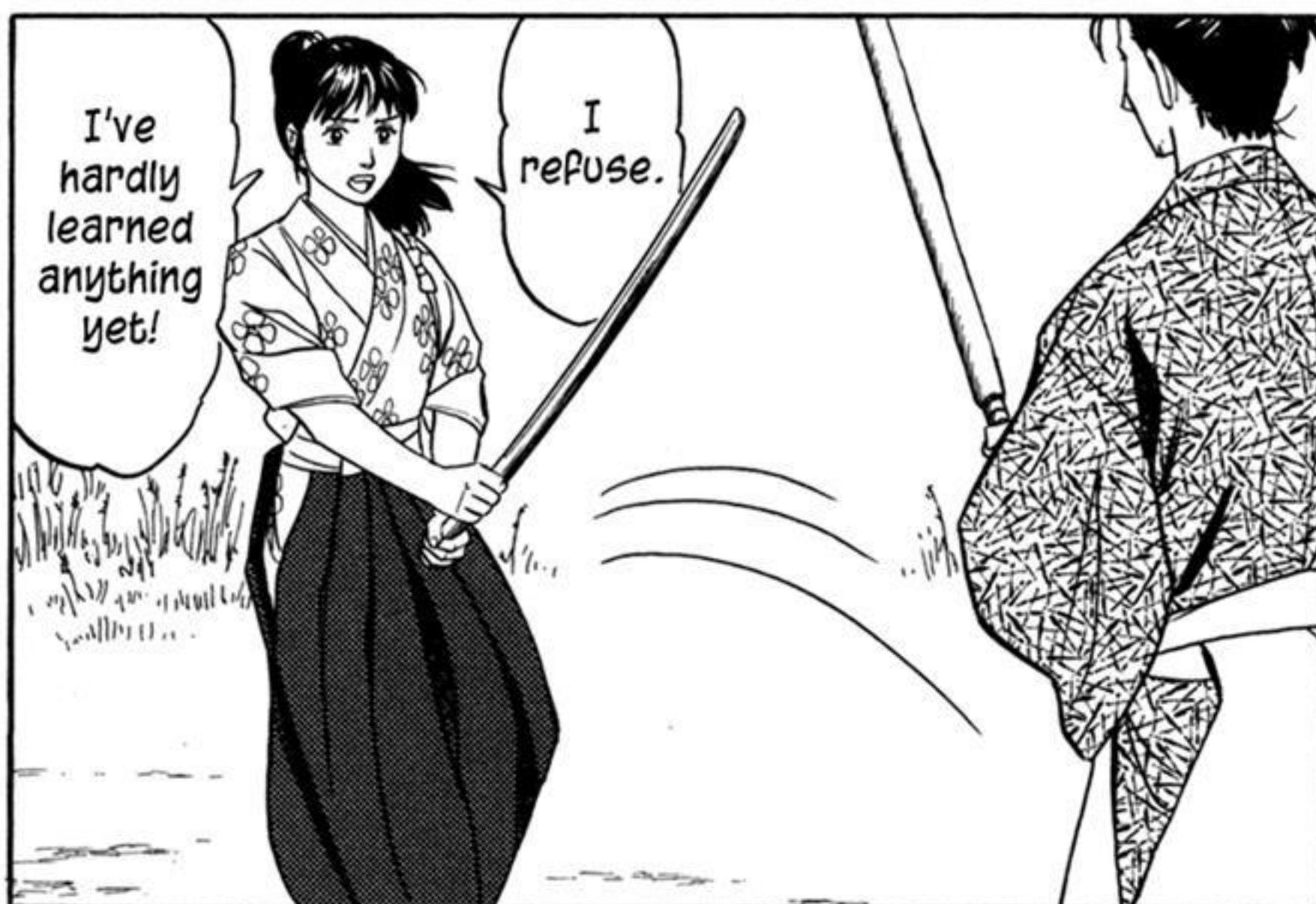








Doesn't seem that way to me.



I've hardly learned anything yet!

I refuse.

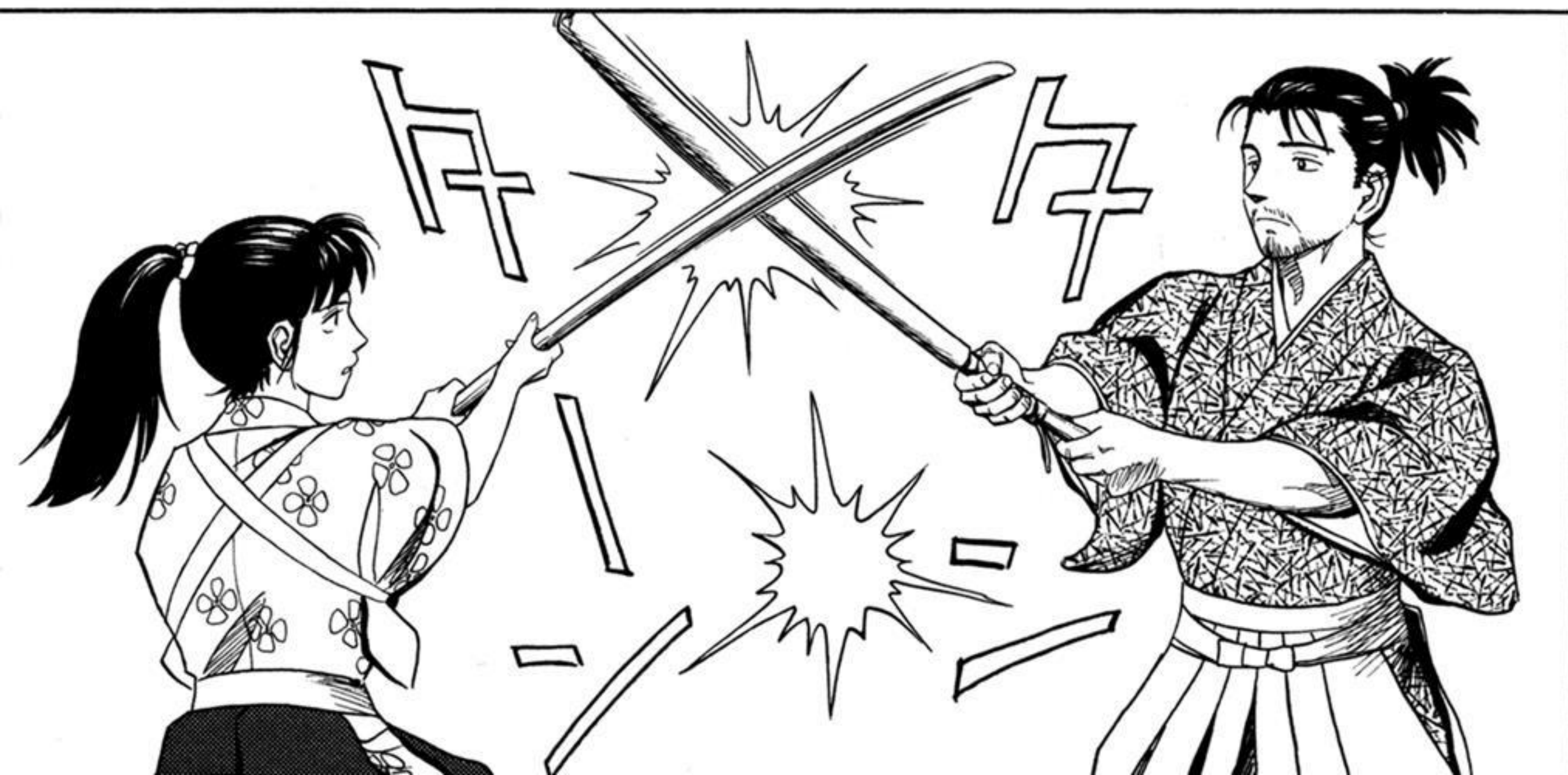


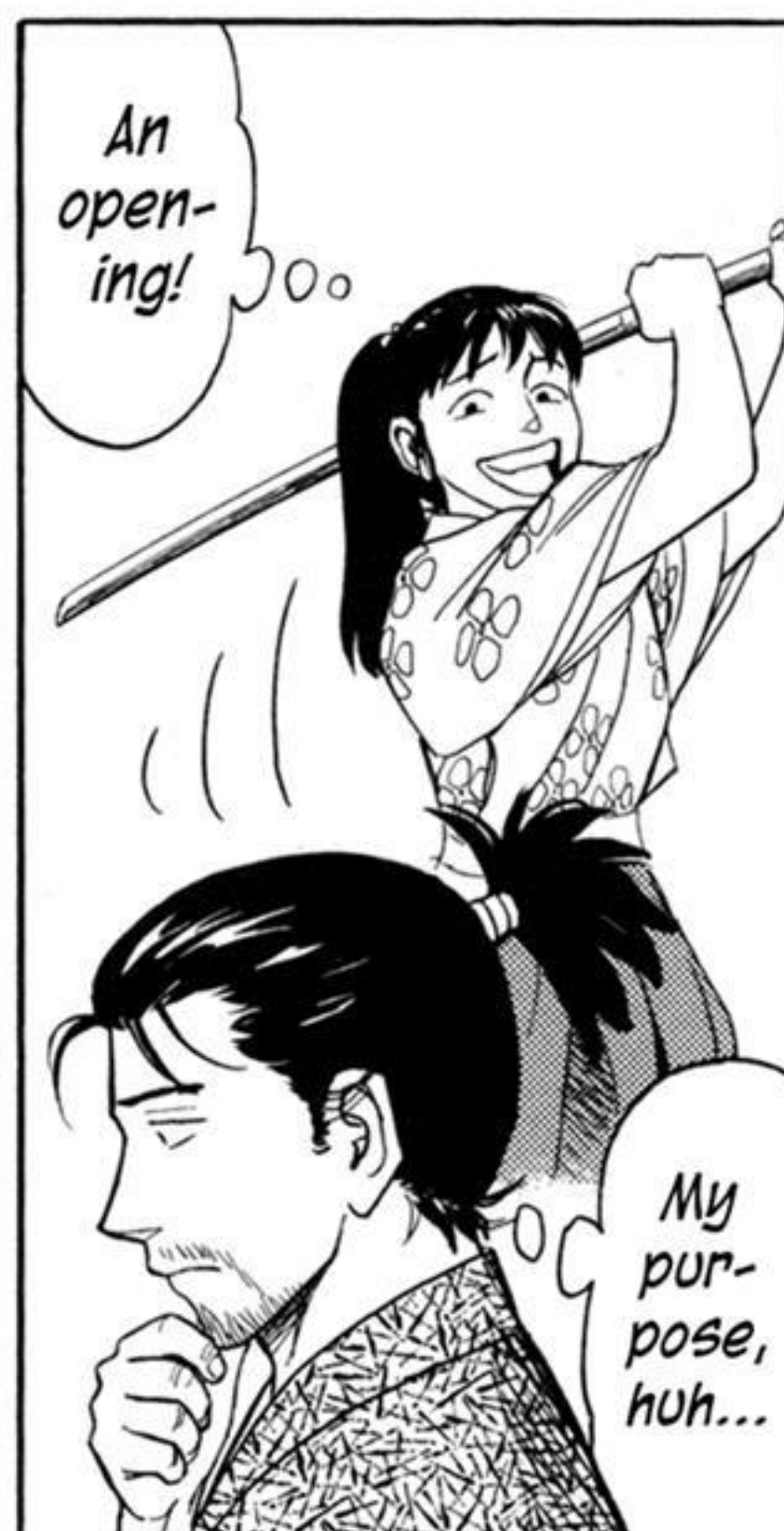
I can teach her fine without having to worry about injuries.

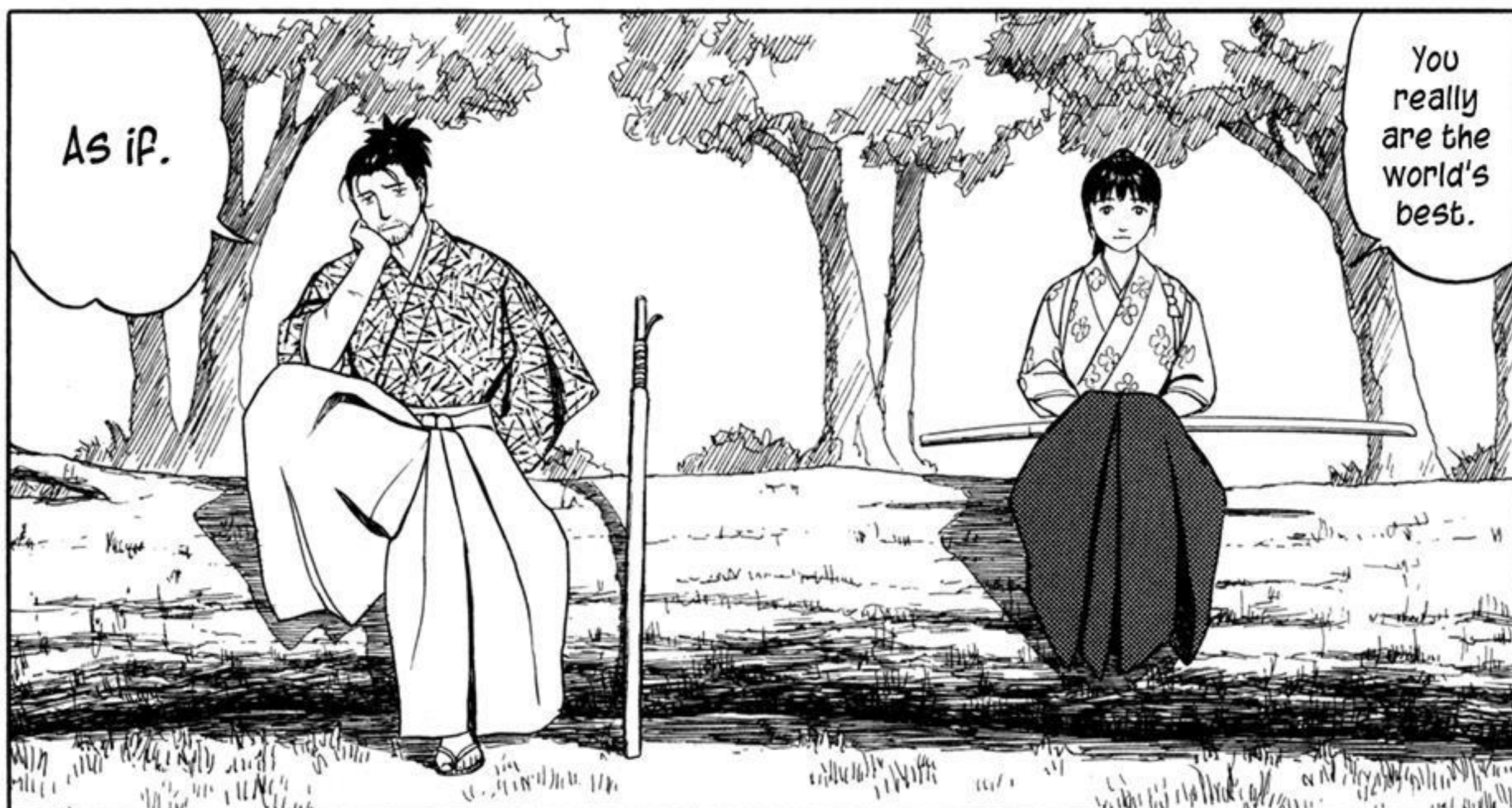
And a lot of that definitely has to do with this new shinai.



This girl's shown a considerable amount of growth in such a short period of time...







Mt. Haruna







Chapter 3: True Warfare





Leave
me
alone!



You think
a girl like
you can
become a
samurai or
something!?

Haruna...
What do
you think
you're
playing
at?



That your
mother, father,
grandmother,
and all your
siblings were
killed!

You do
know,
don't
you!?

Yes, I
know!



When I came
back home
on that night,
my family had
already been
slaughtered!

What...!?



N-no!
You're
wrong,
Yokichi!



They
were
killed
because
you stole
the gold!



*They
were
killed
right
after
I was
abduct-
ed!*



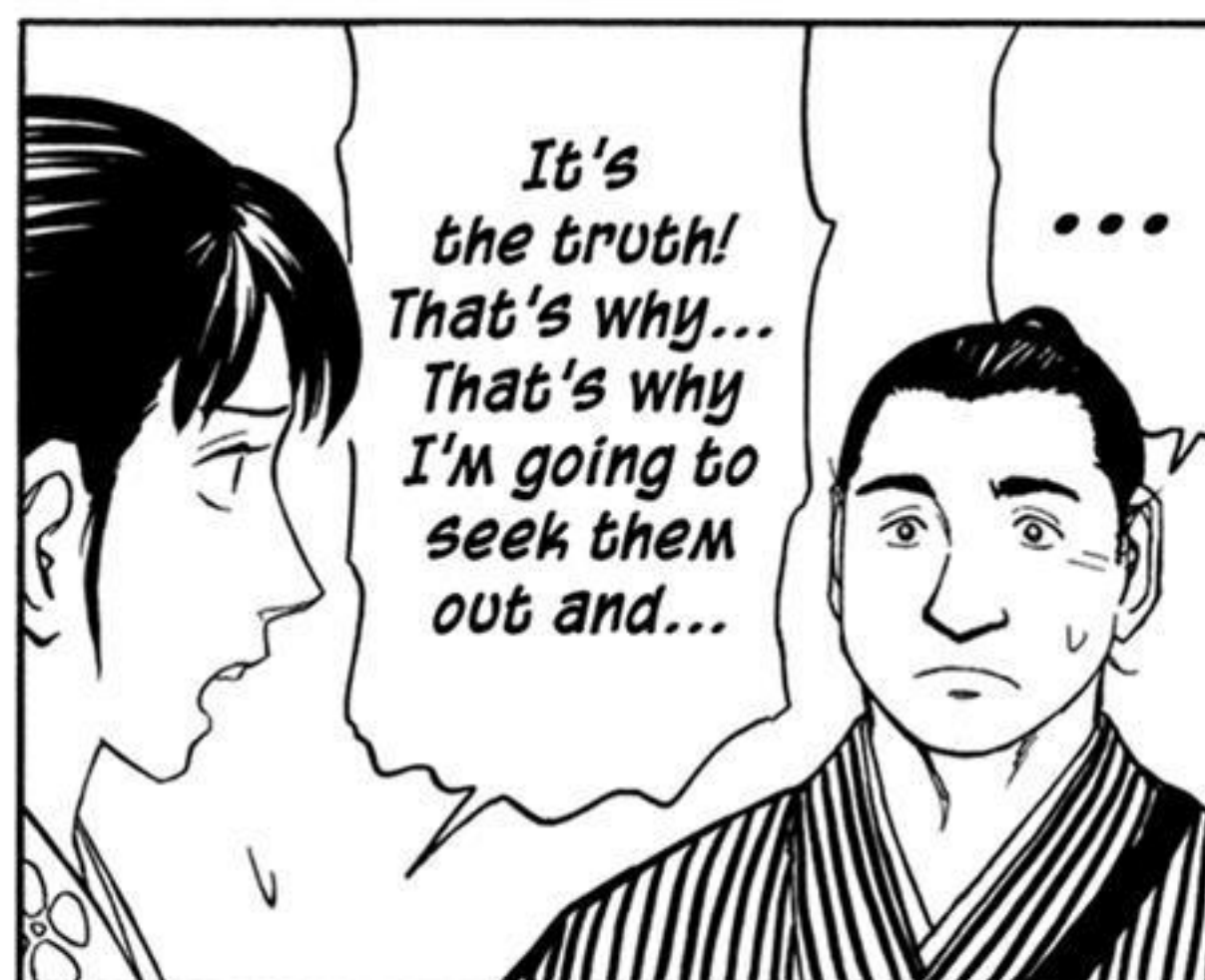
*Was
already
half
dried by
then...*

*Their
blood...*



*Those
disgust-
ing sons
of bitches!*

*So
that's
how it
was...*

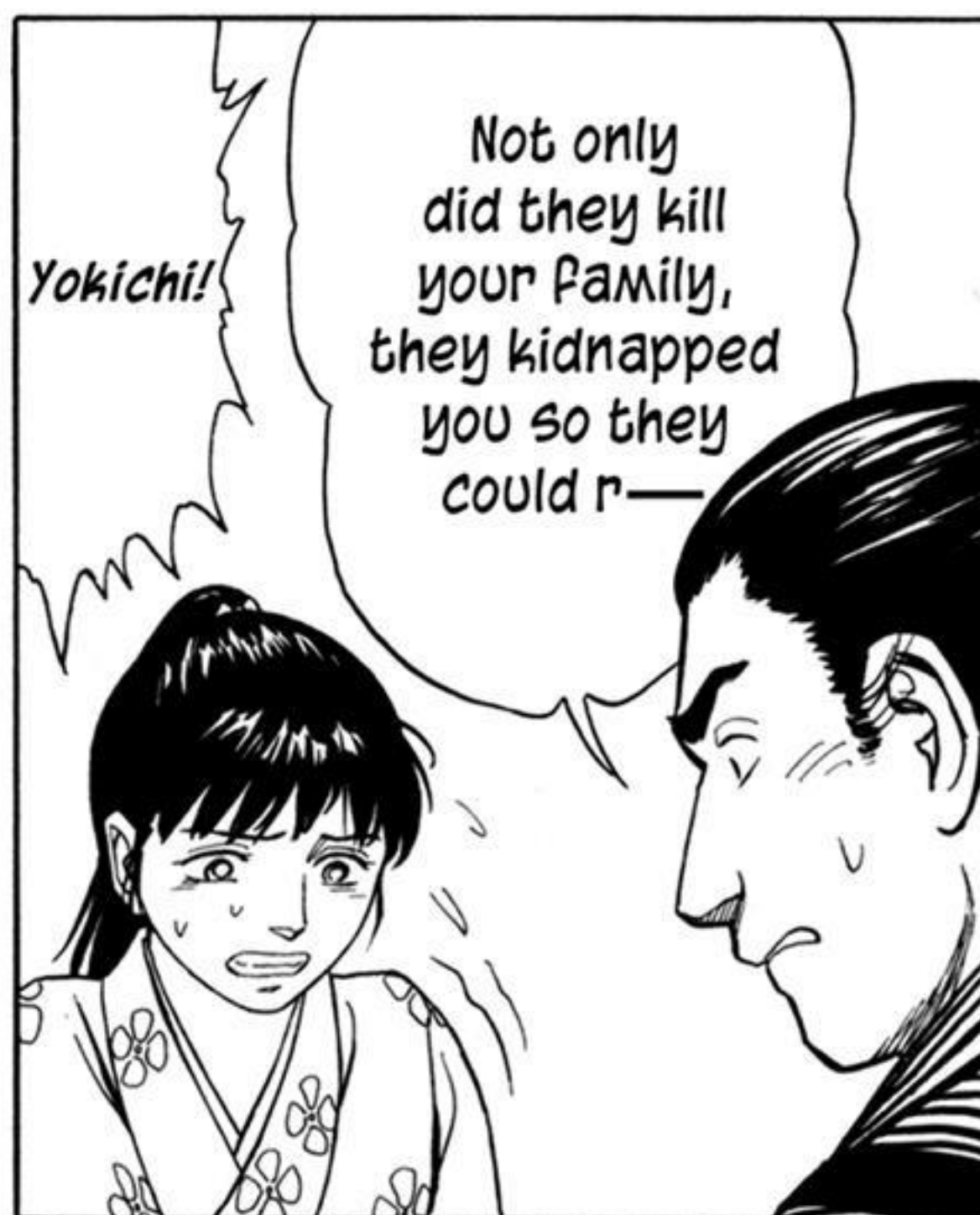


*It's
the truth!
That's why...
That's why
I'm going to
seek them
out and...*

...

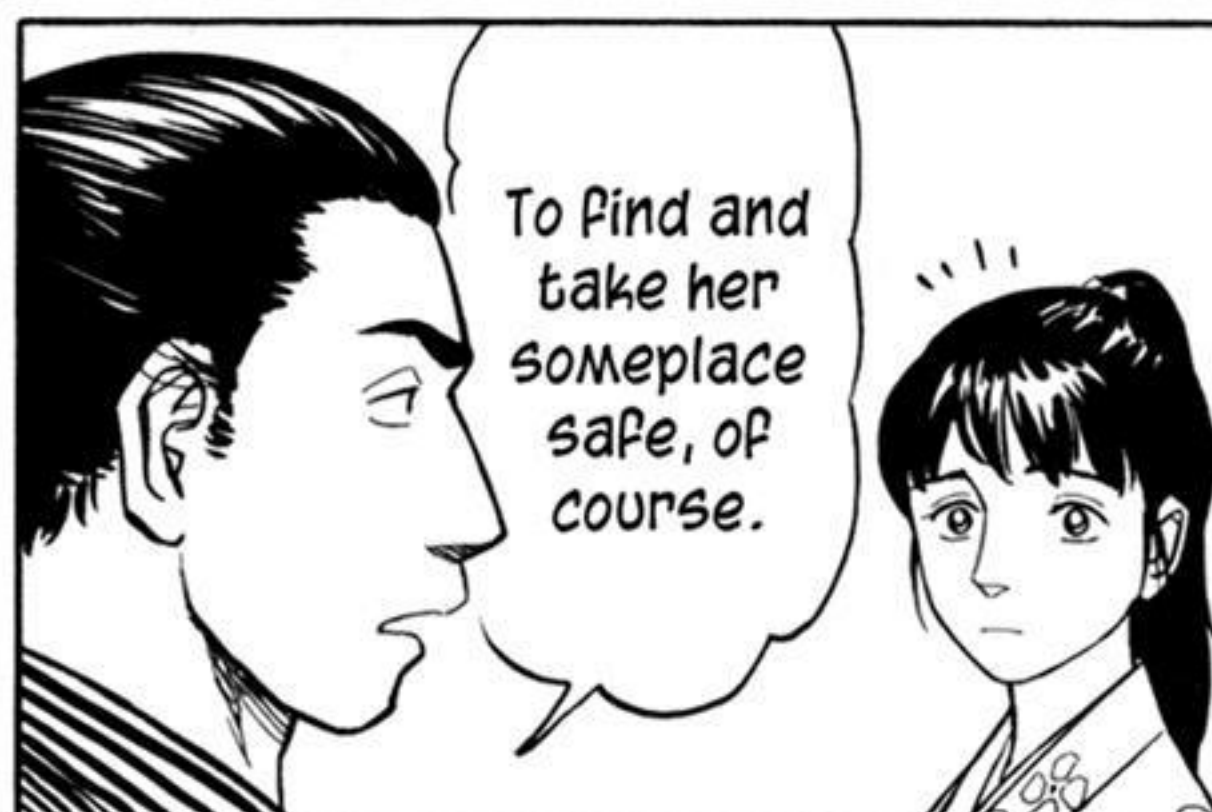


*T-this here is,
umm... My master!
Master Bungorō!*



Yokichi!

*Not only
did they kill
your family,
they kidnapped
you so they
could r—*





I'm not an item, you know.

So you came to *take me away*? Hmph.



What did you say!?

*Commoners in feudal Japan usually did not have surnames



Kanra... Haruno-suke...

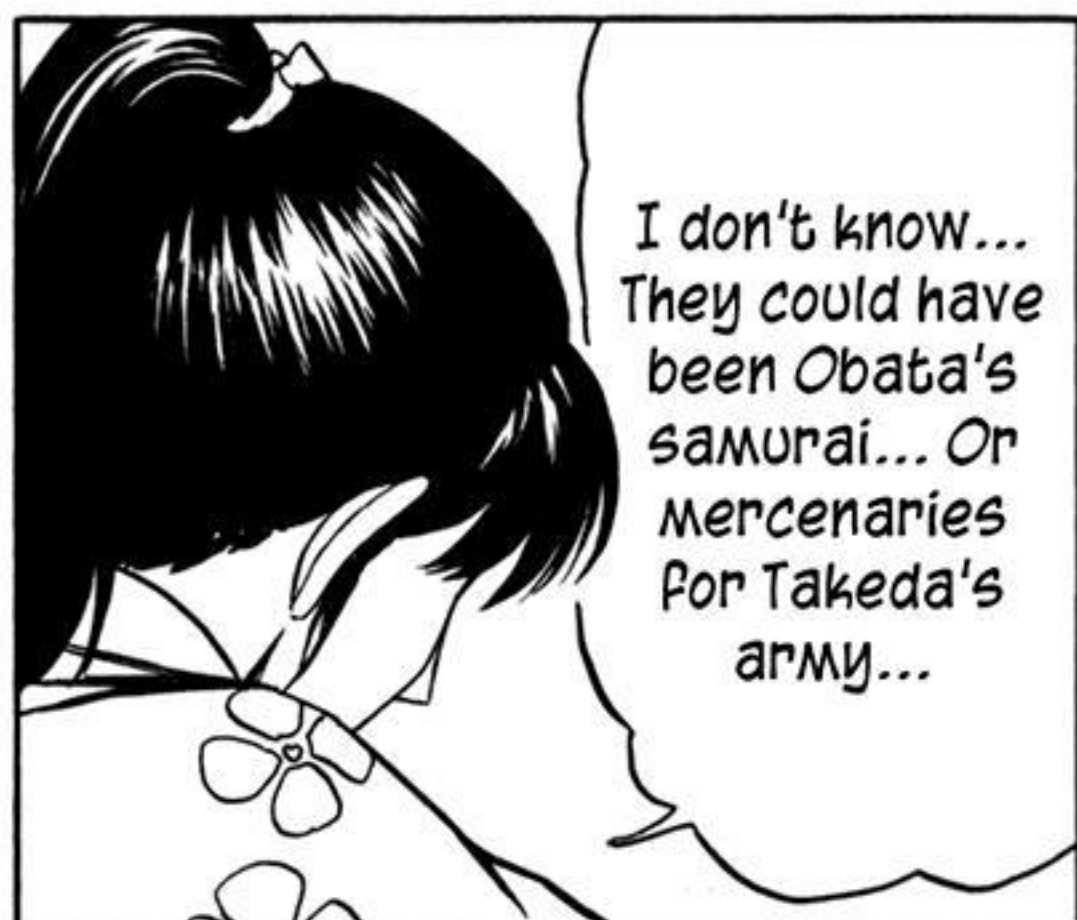


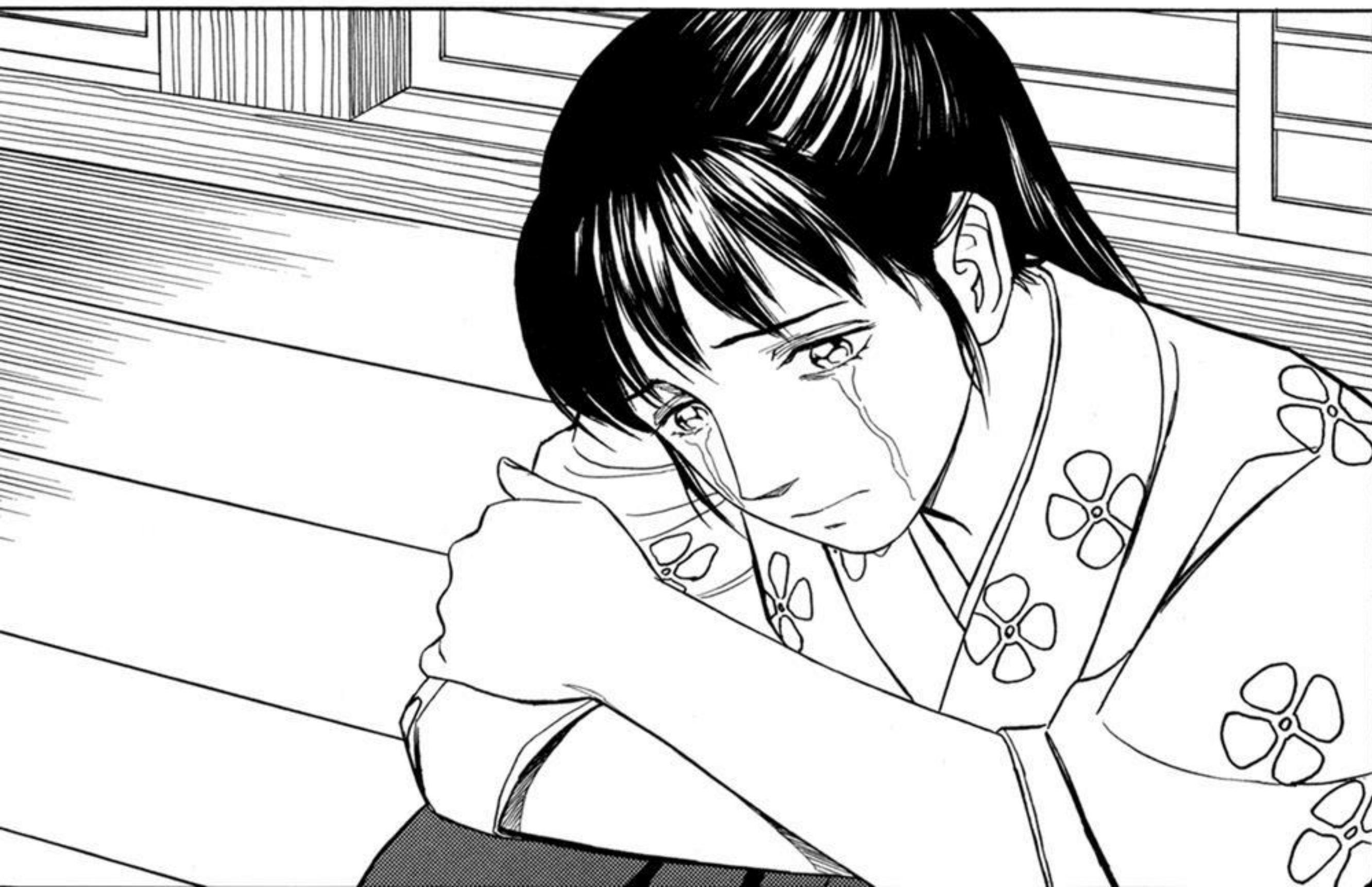
...Uh huh.

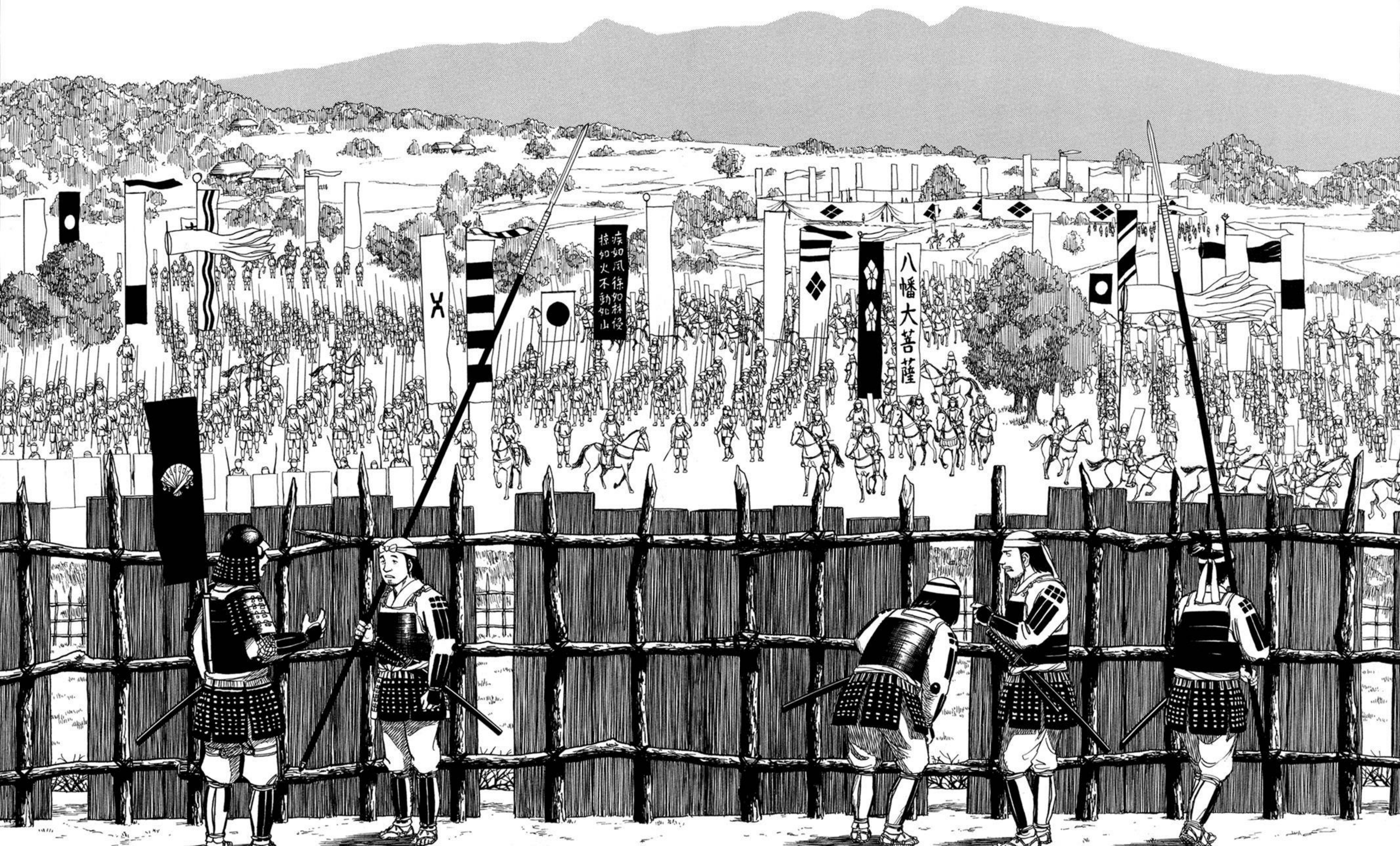


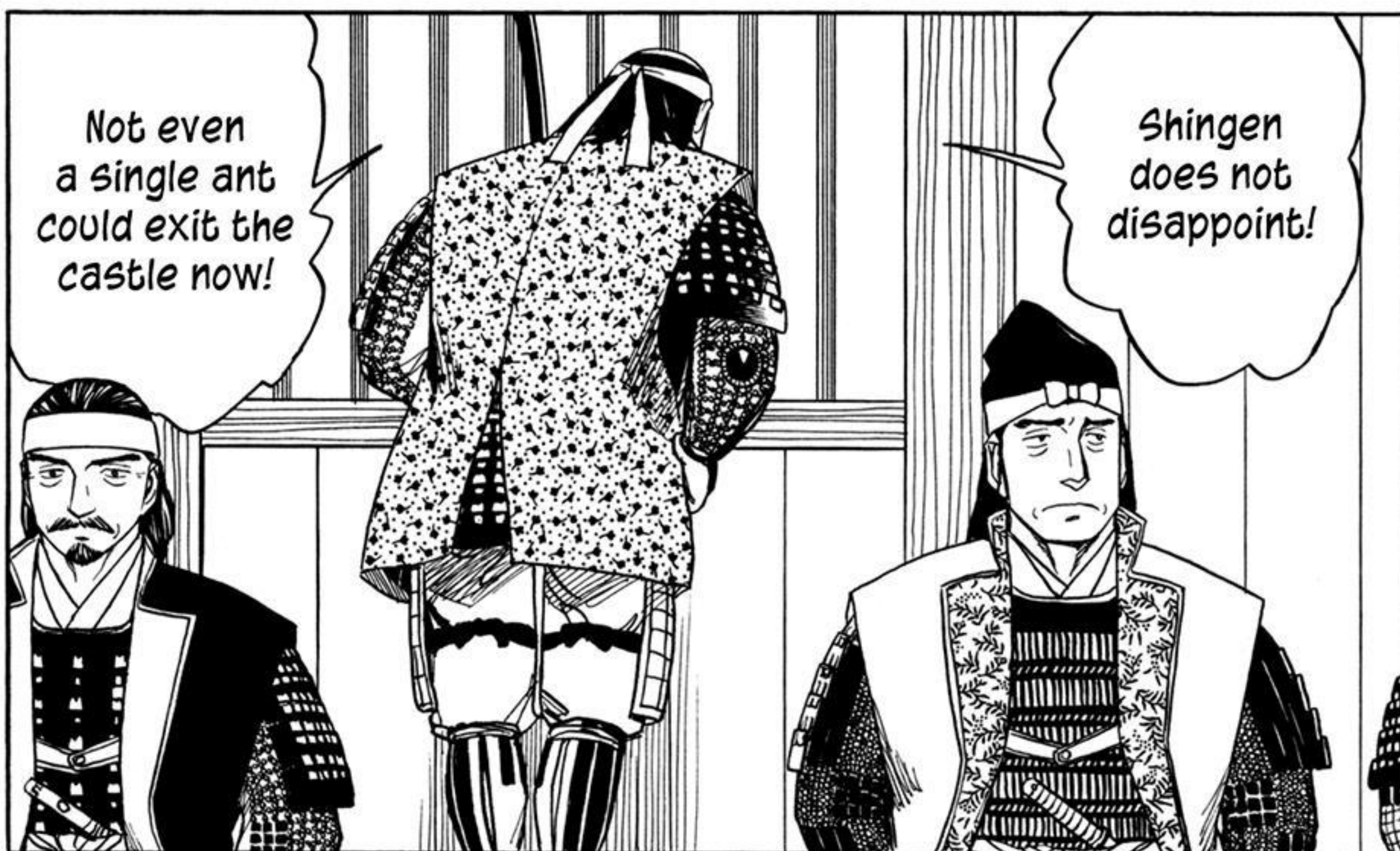
Let me guess... Your hometown is Kanra...?















Make
sure to
go full-out!
We'll stir up
the enemy
lines!

We are stationed
at the castle's
rear gates, from
where we will sally
forth and cause
a sufficient
distraction to
allow the main
forces at the
front gates to
strike as
well!



Stir
them...
With our
blades...



As in,
break
them
up?



Stir
up?



Bungo...
Whether
or not this
castle falls,
this will be
the last duty
I carry out in
service of the
Nagano clan.

Master...

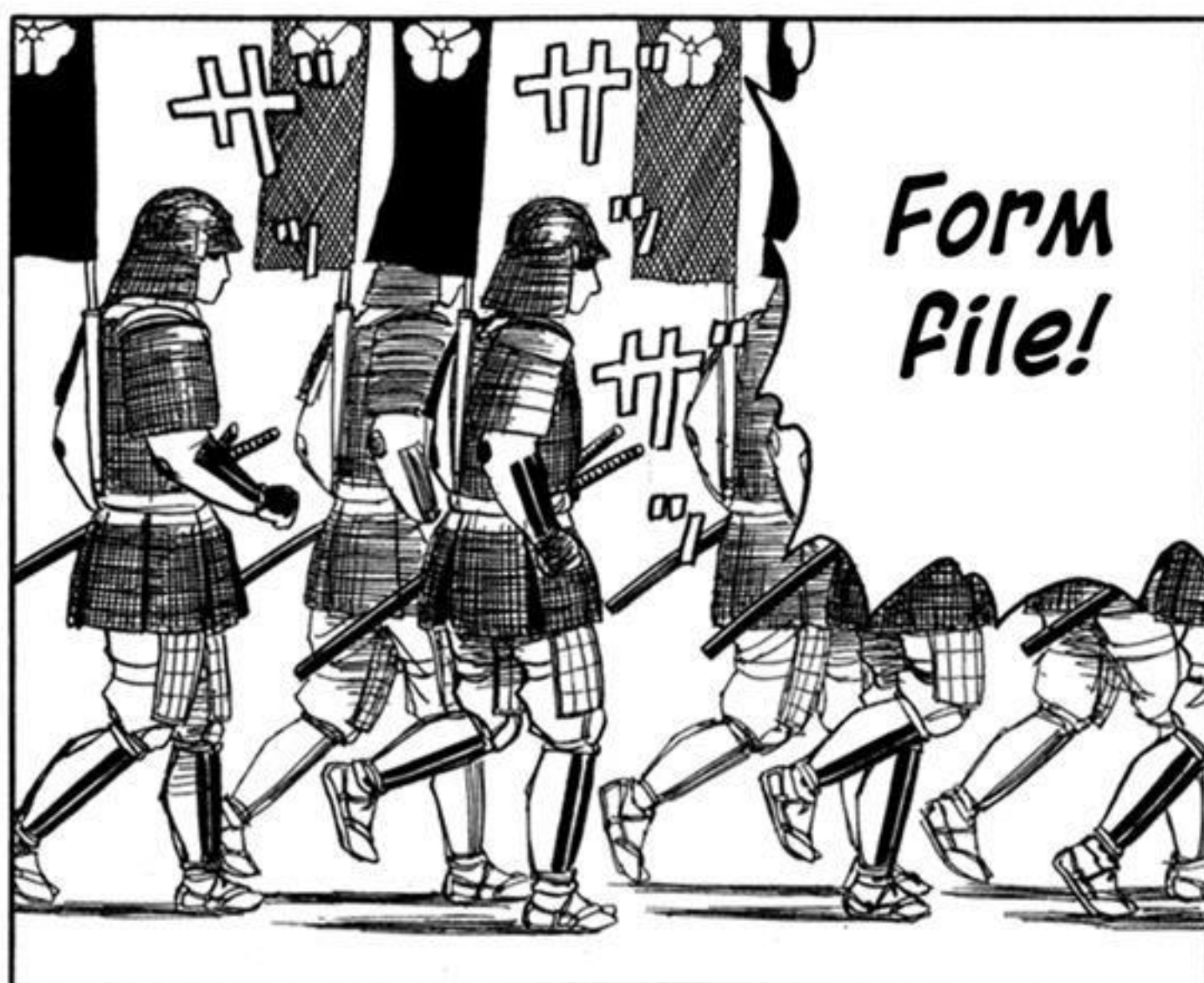


...



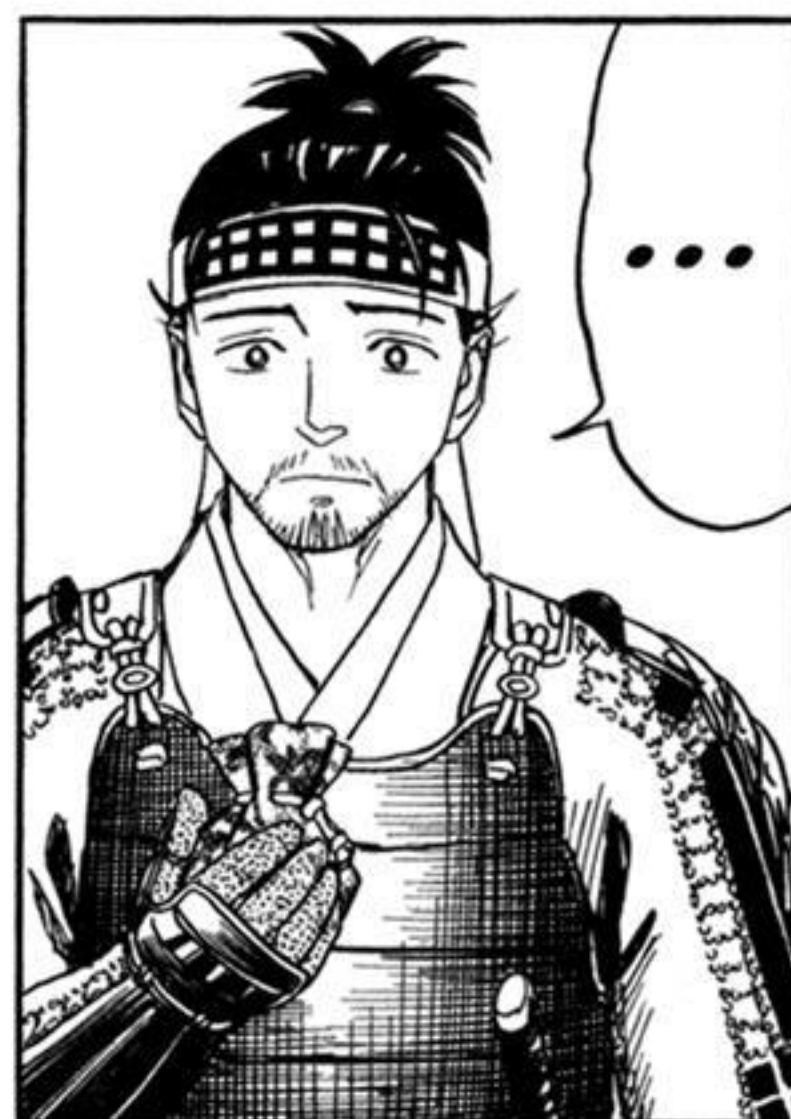
Pardon?

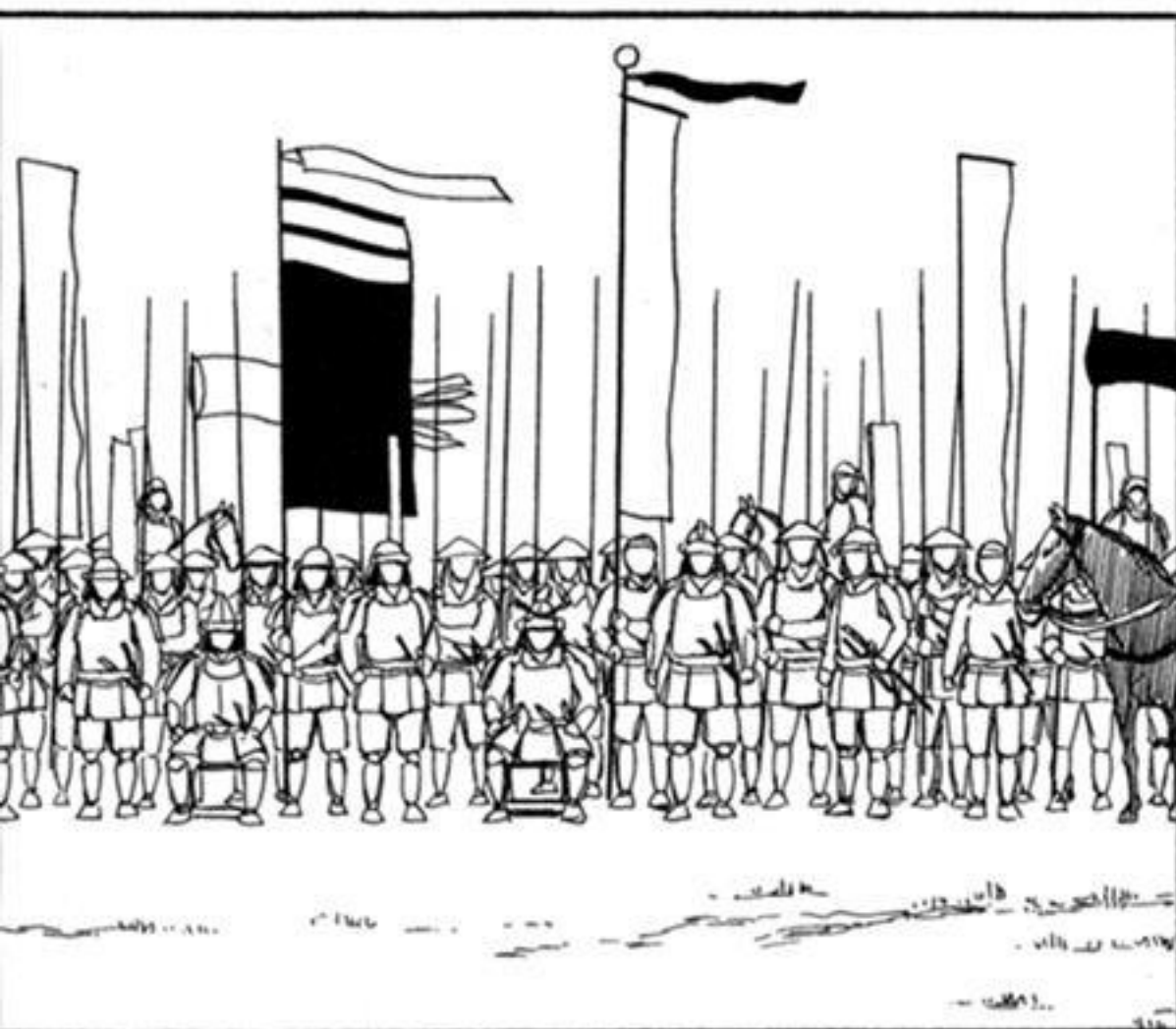
We may
know how to
use a sword...
But what do we
know of true
warfare?





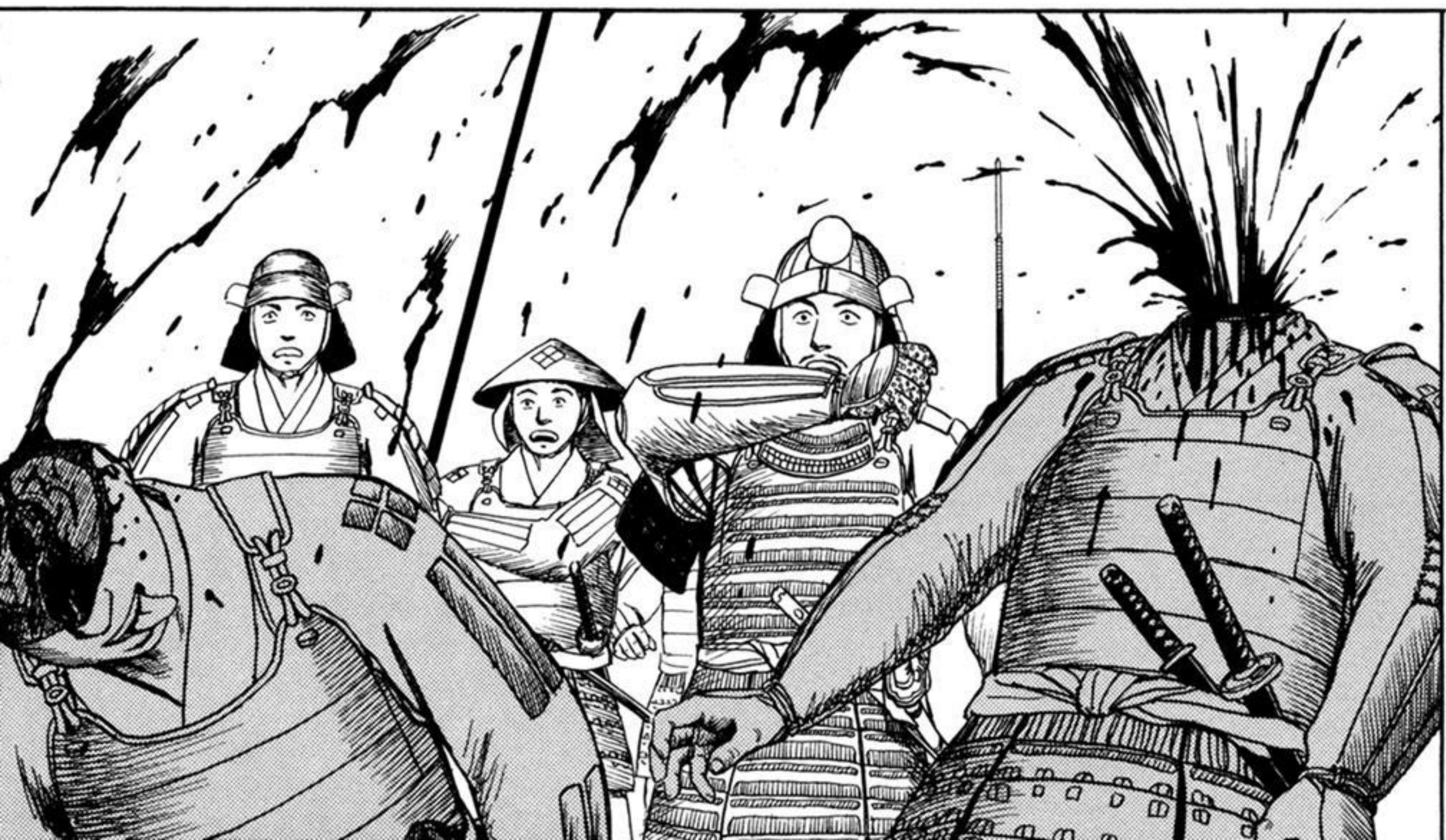


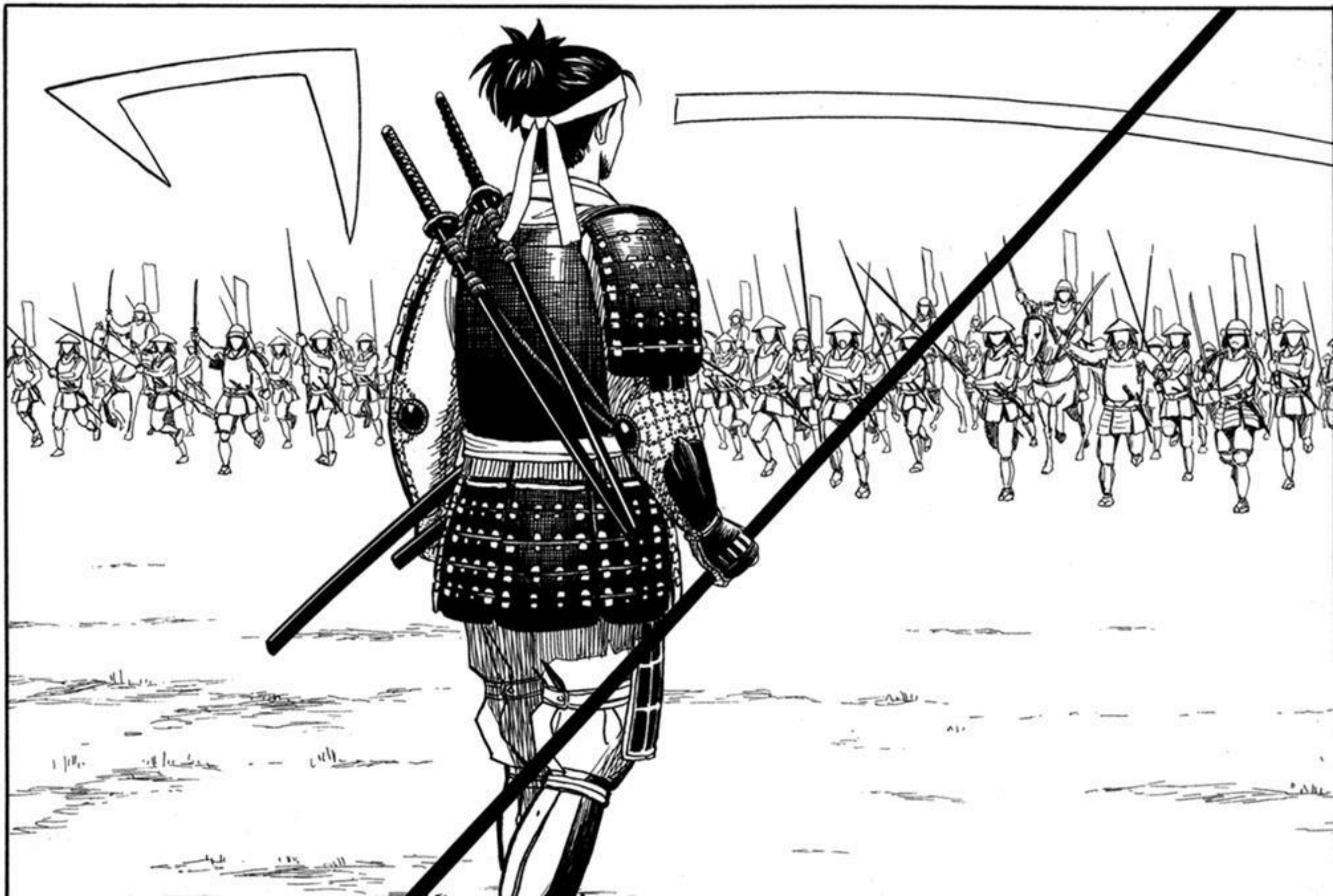








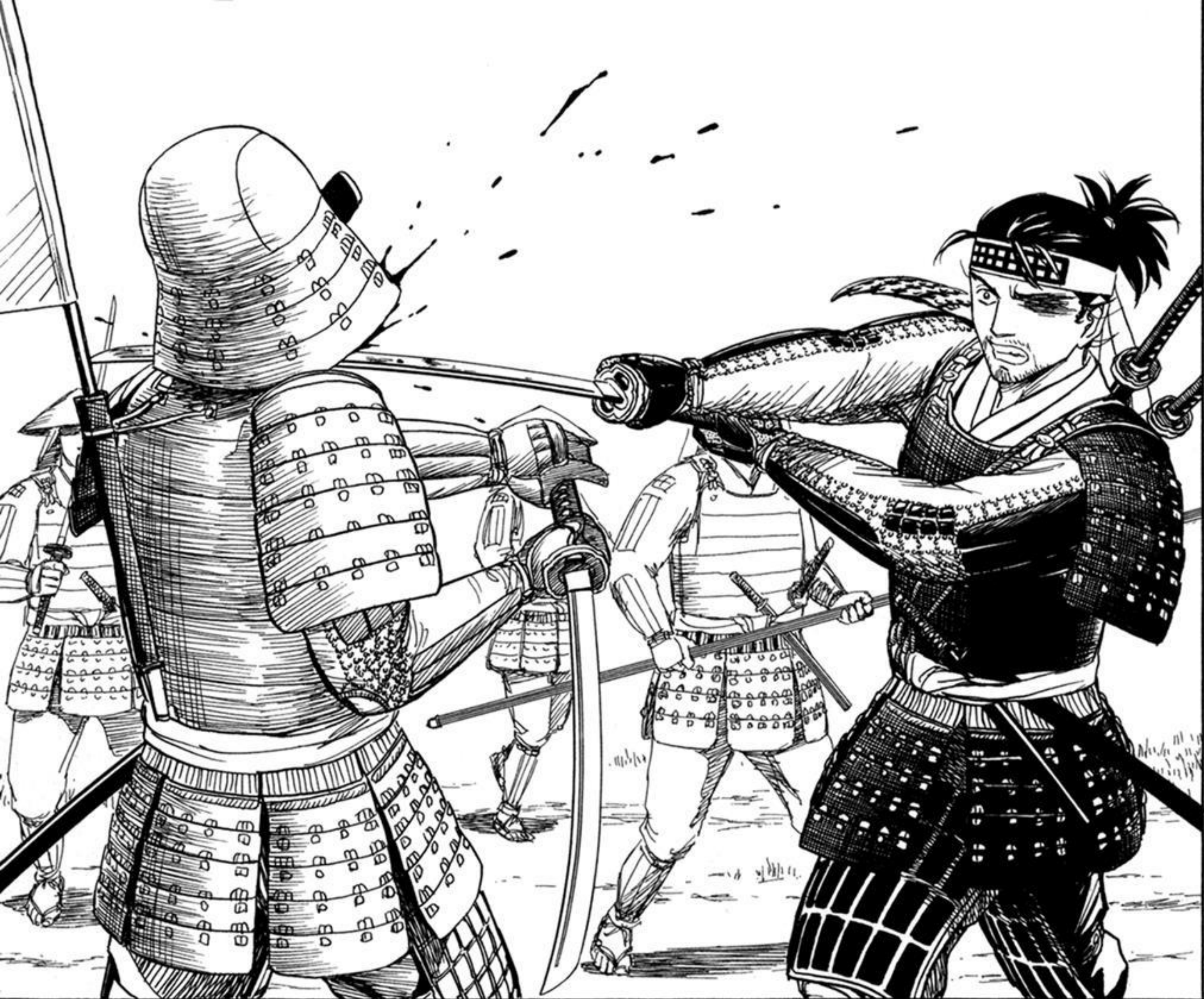




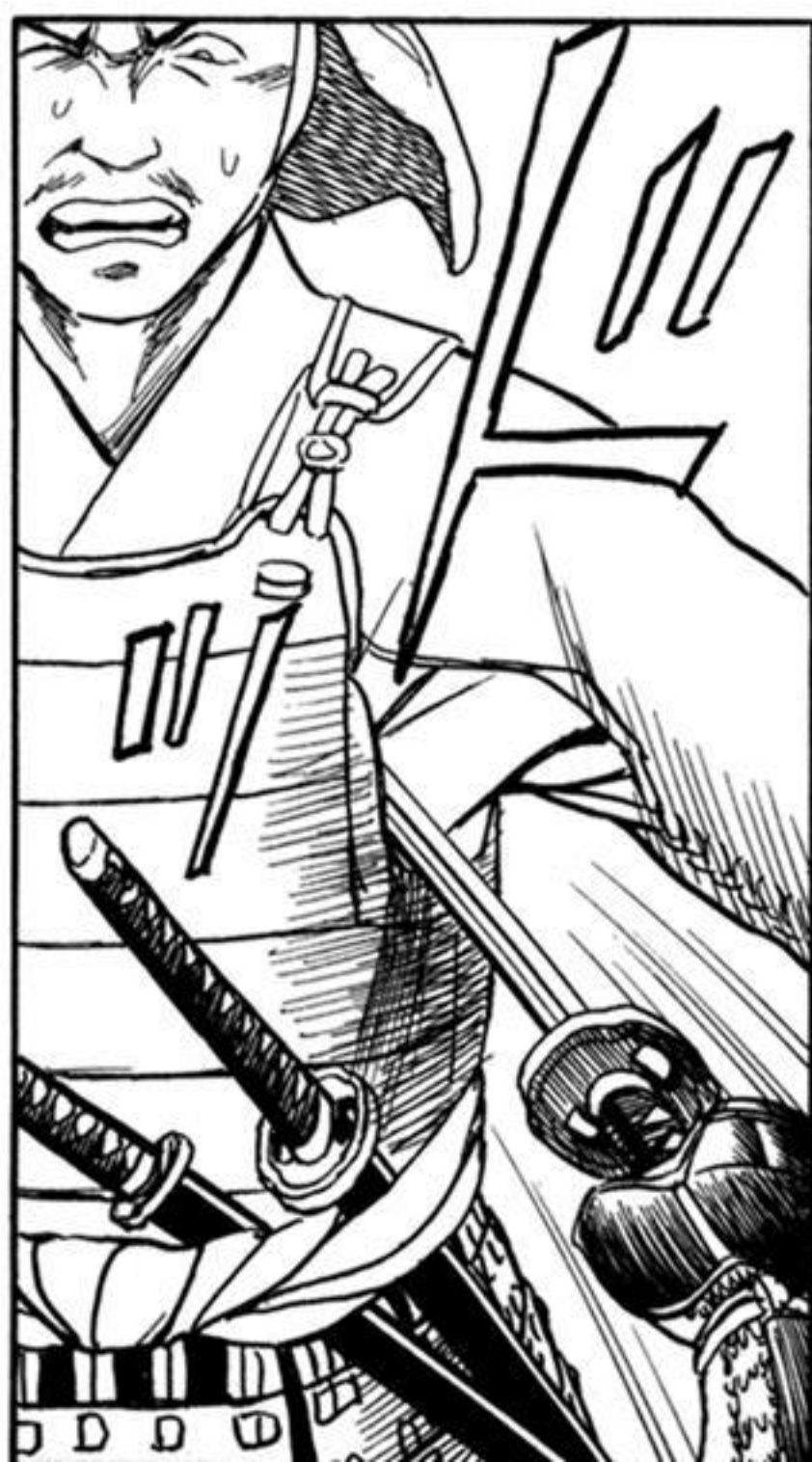
Chapter 4: Blood Spurt



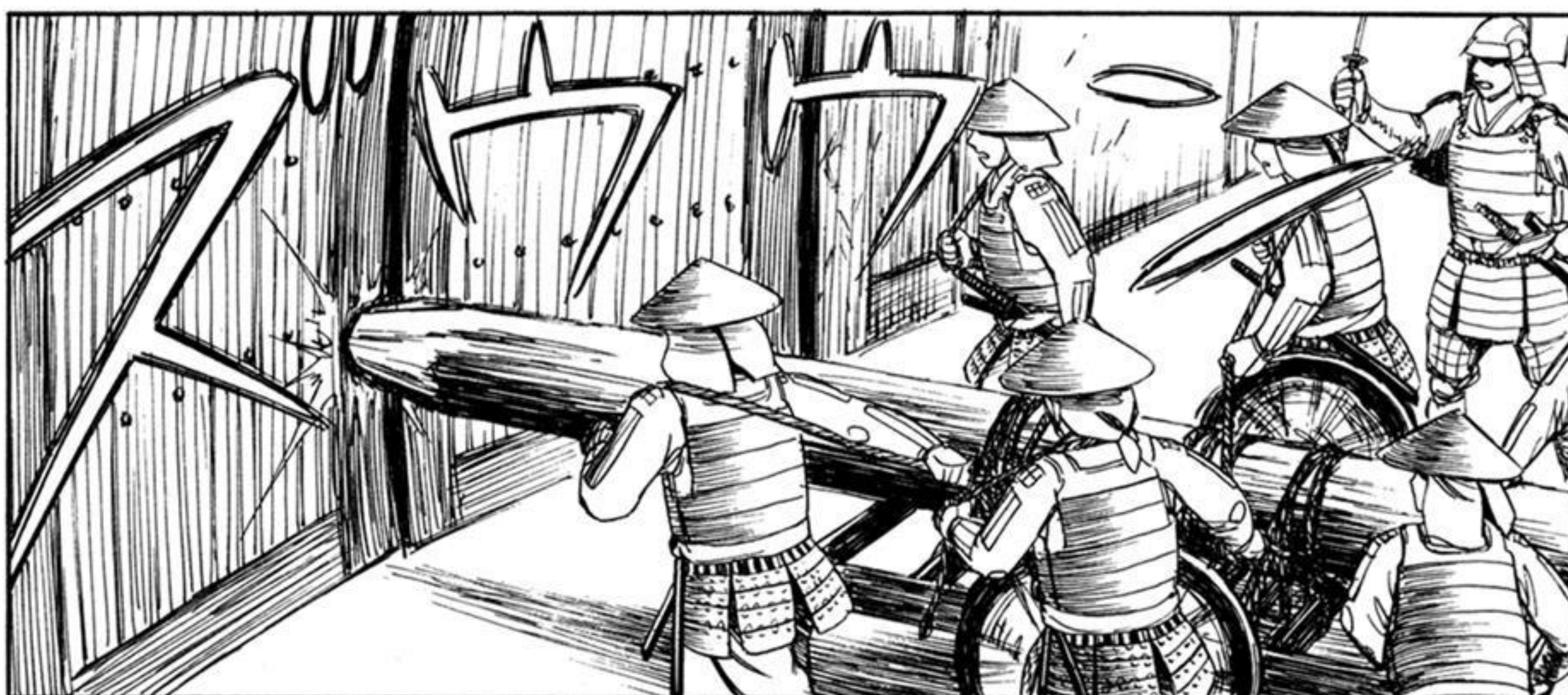
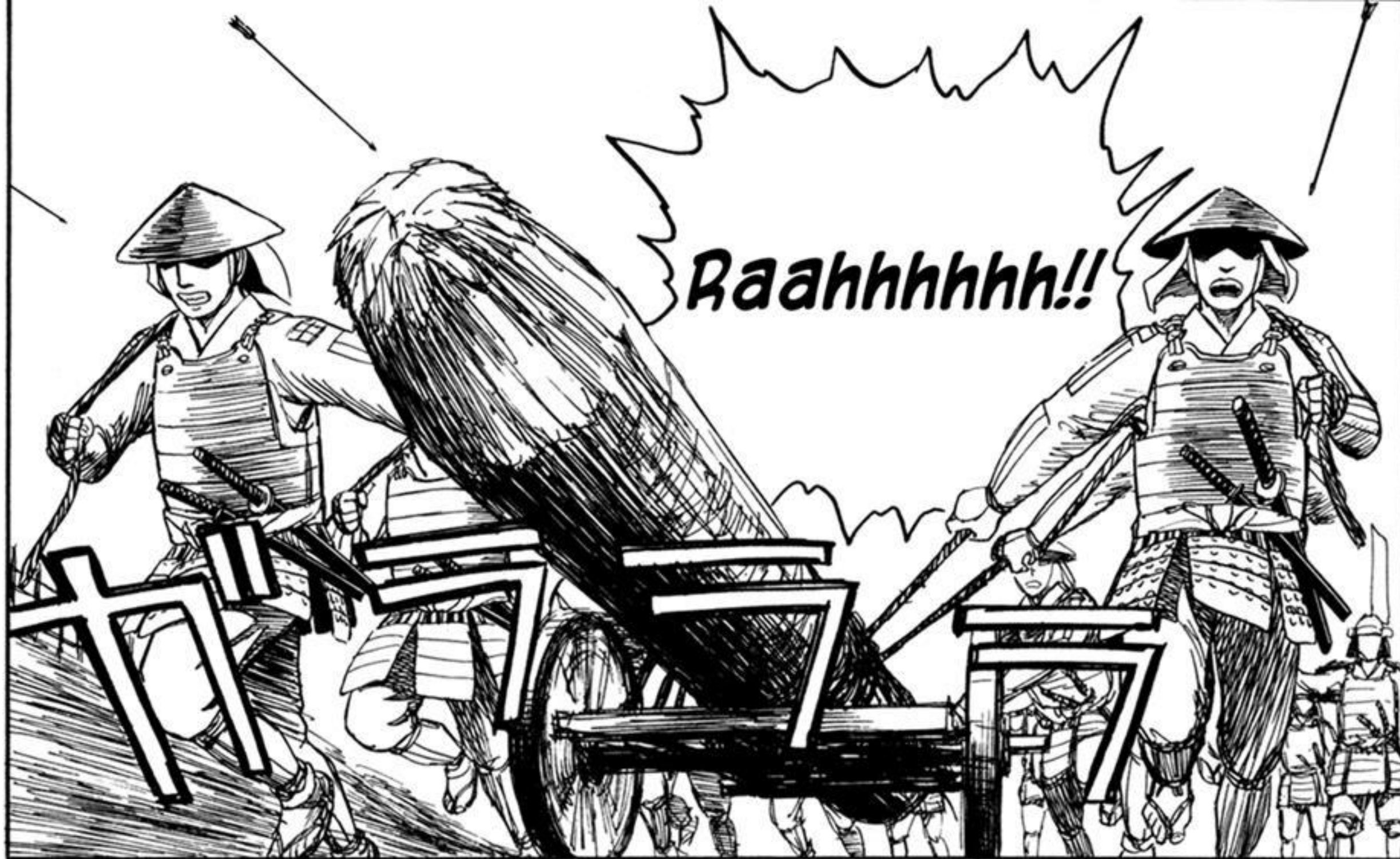


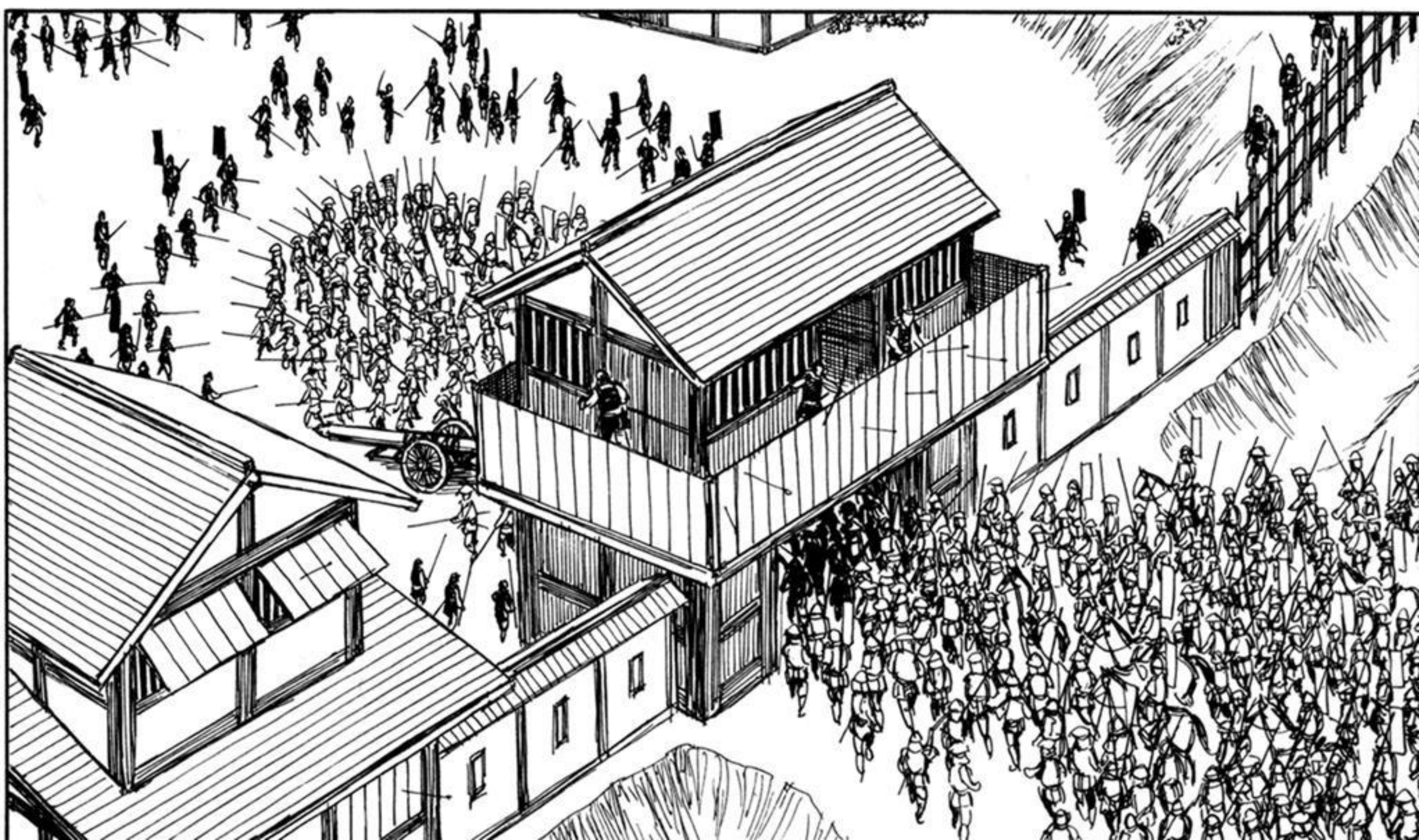
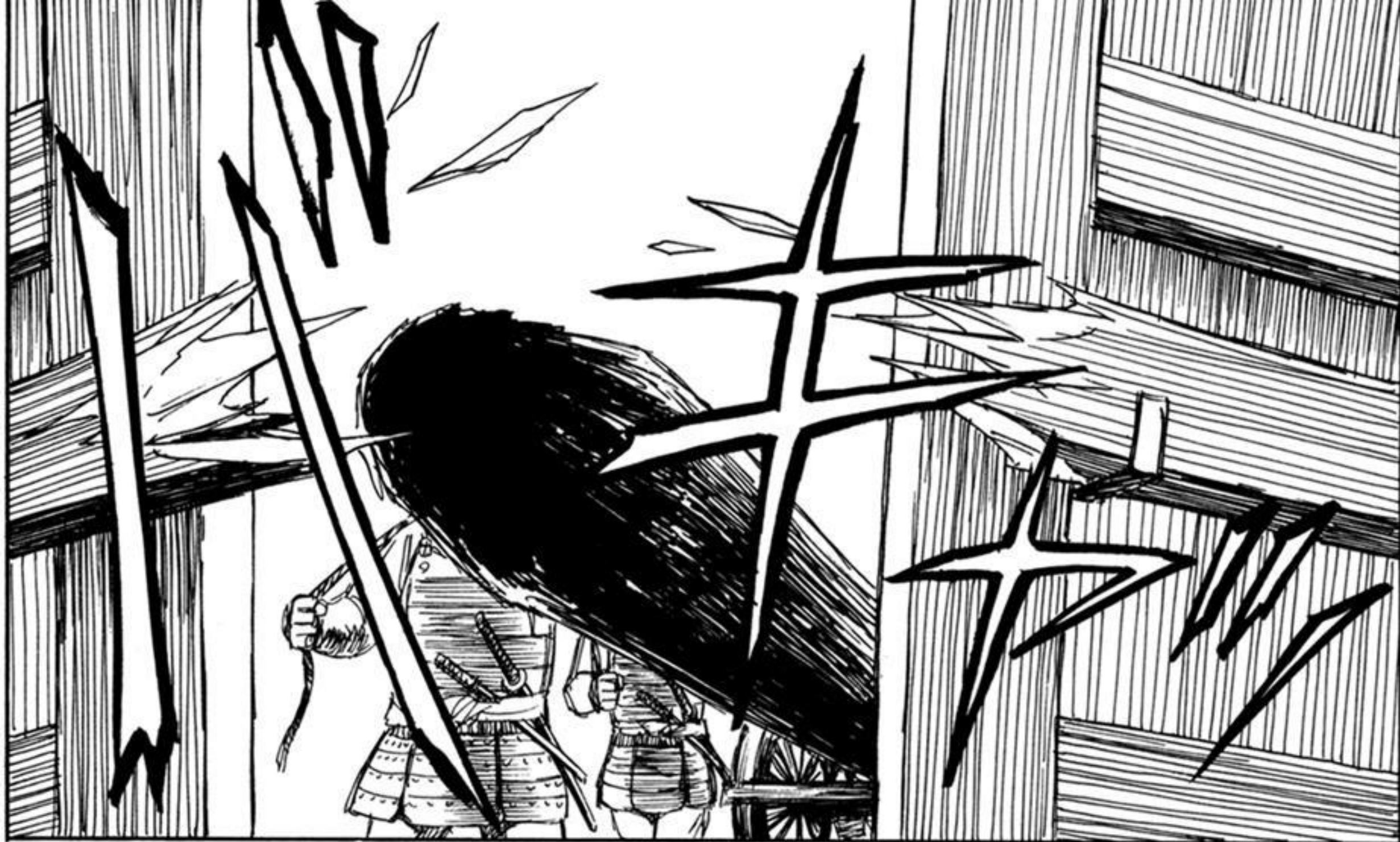


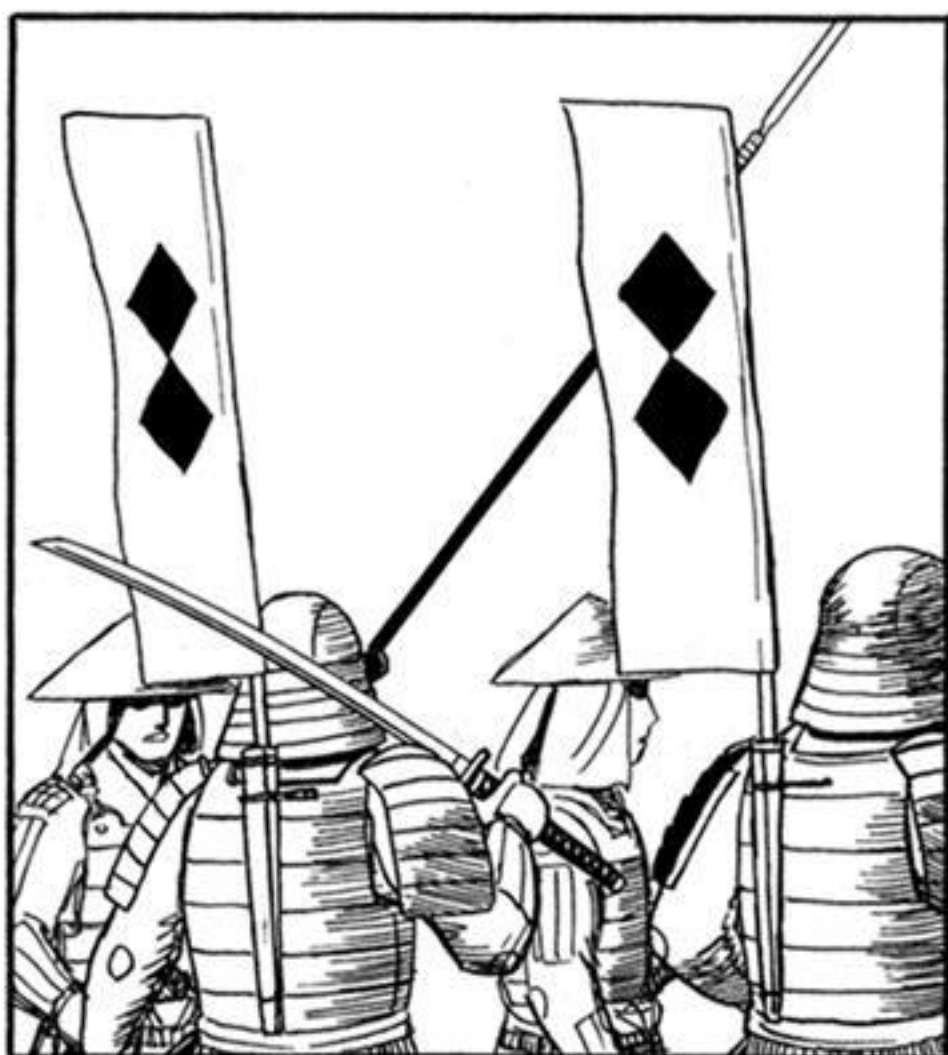


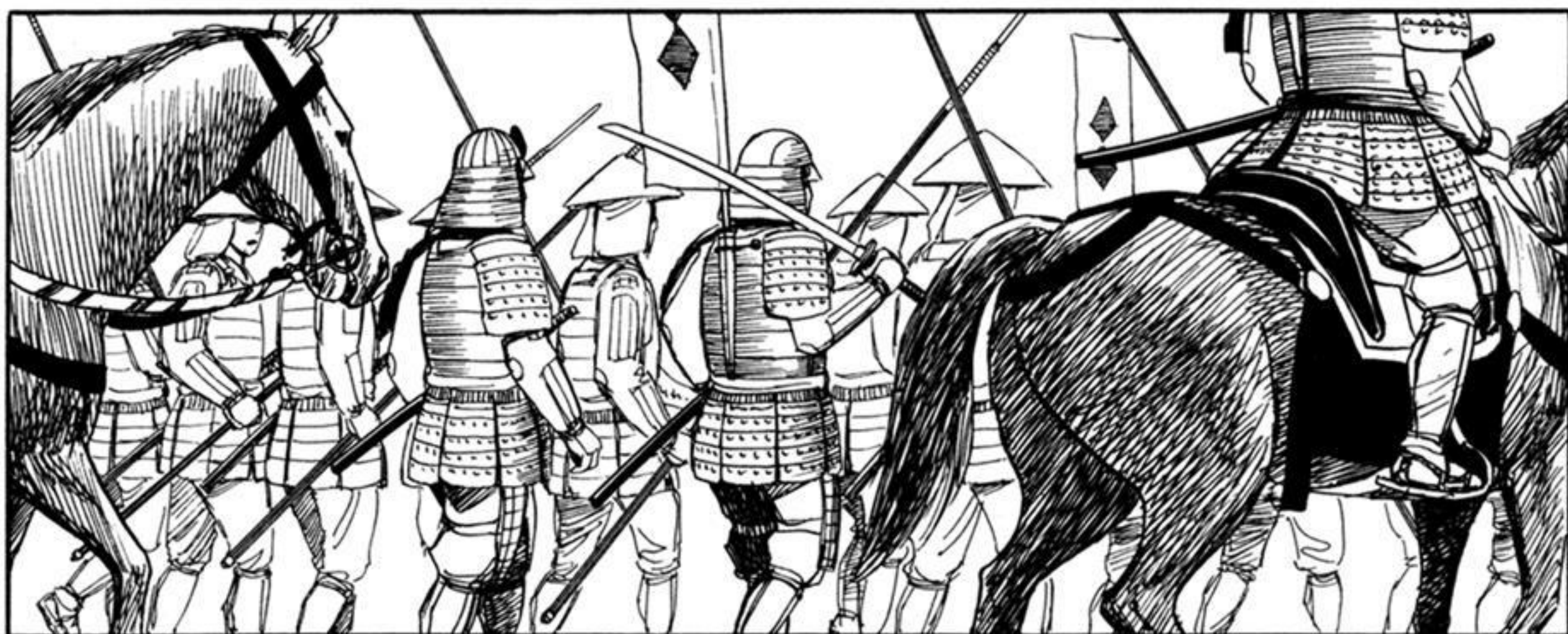


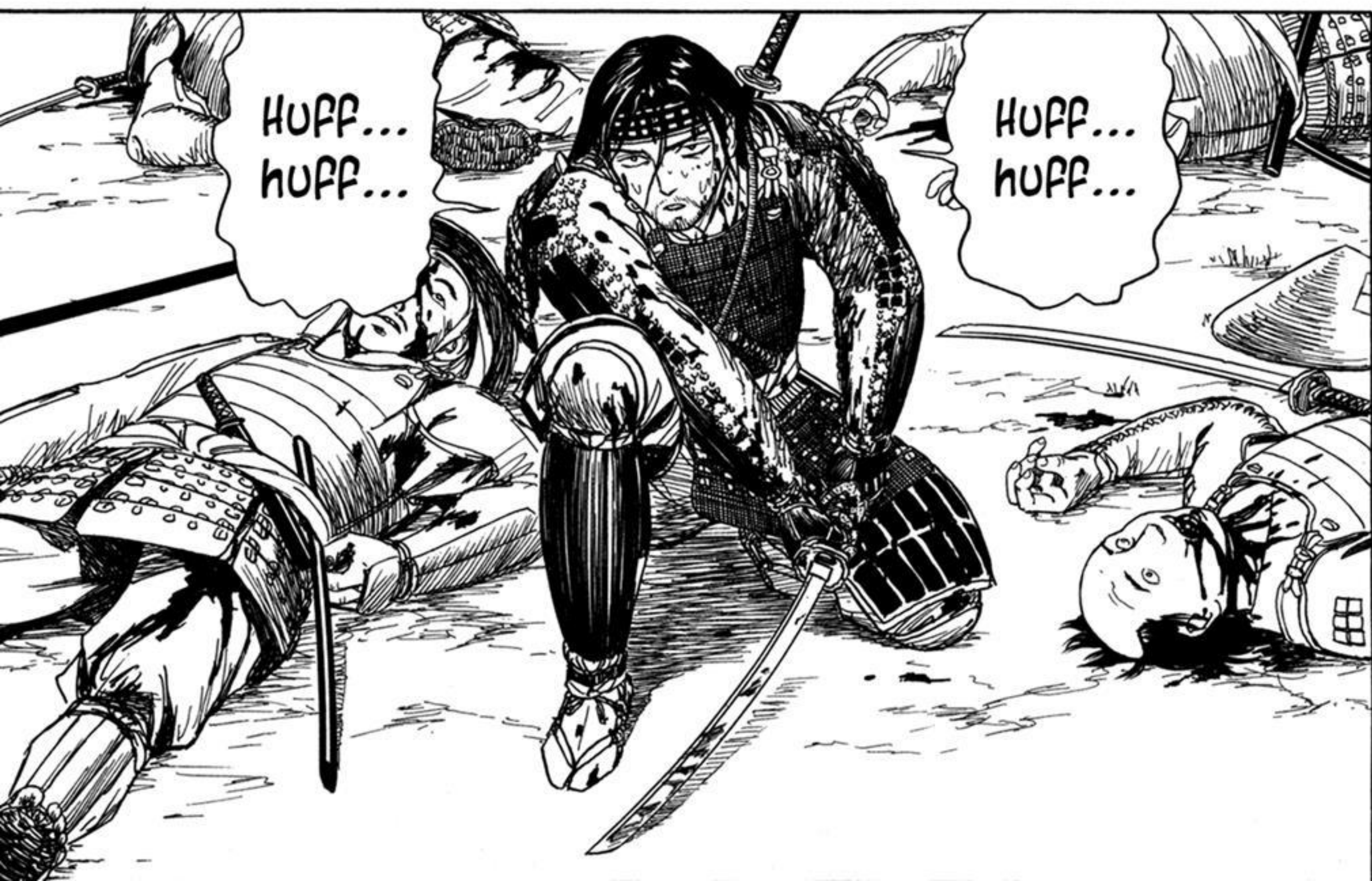


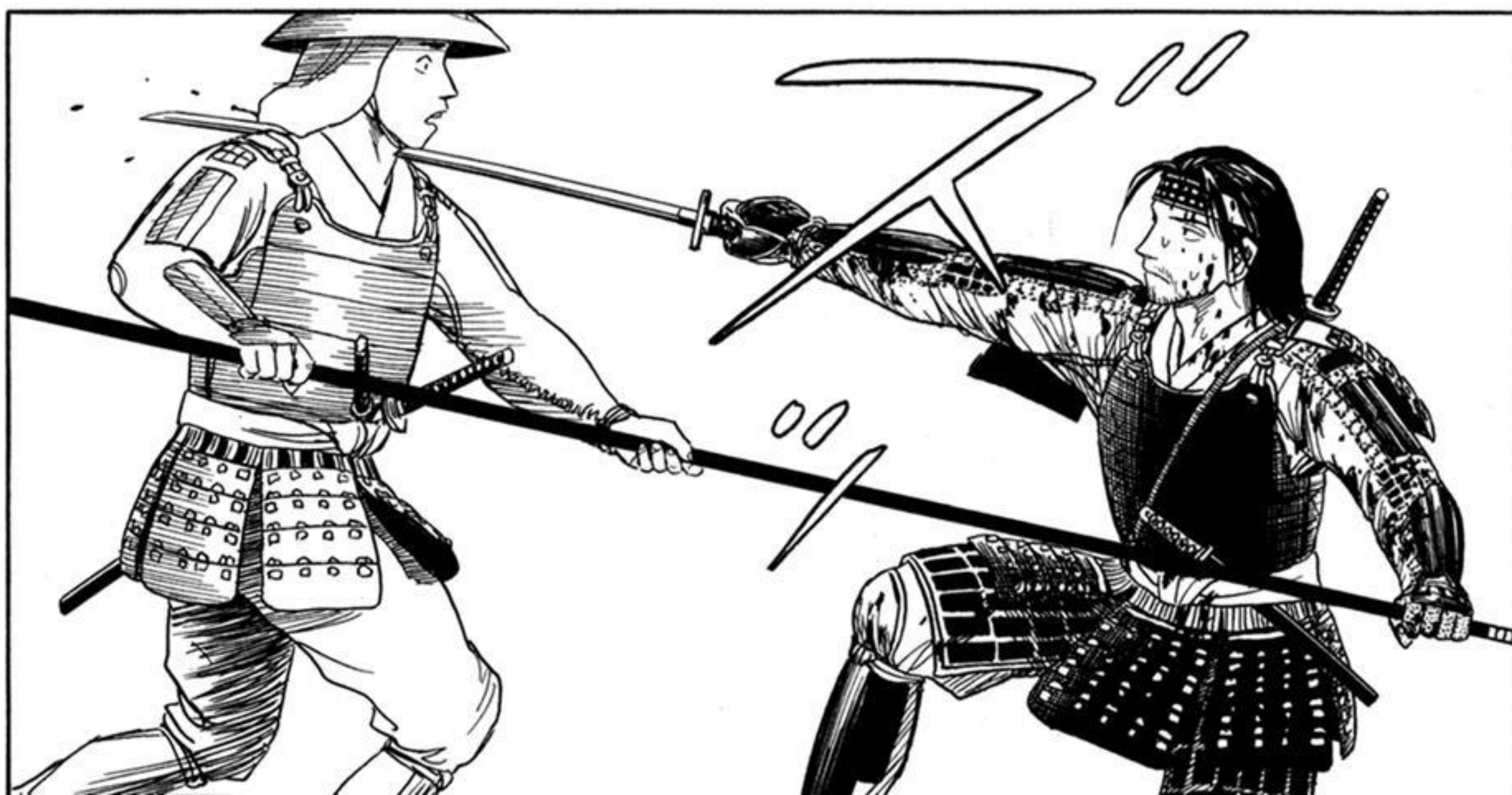
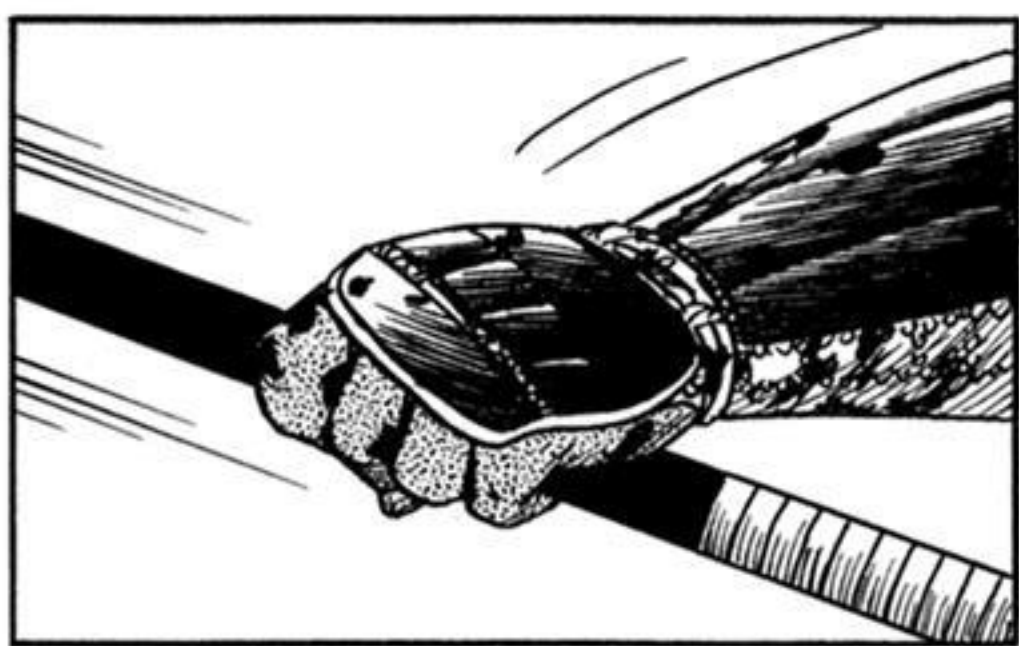


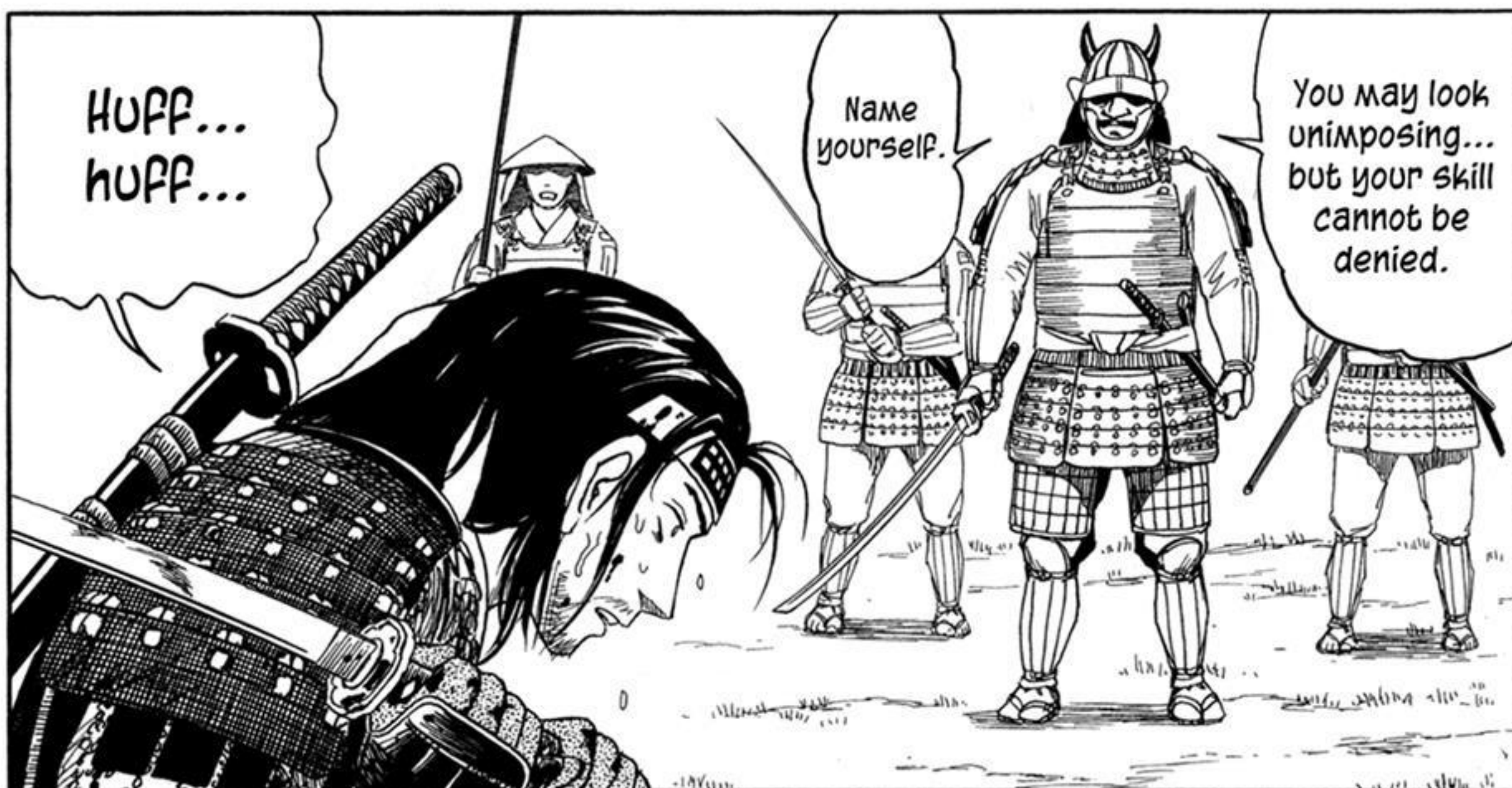


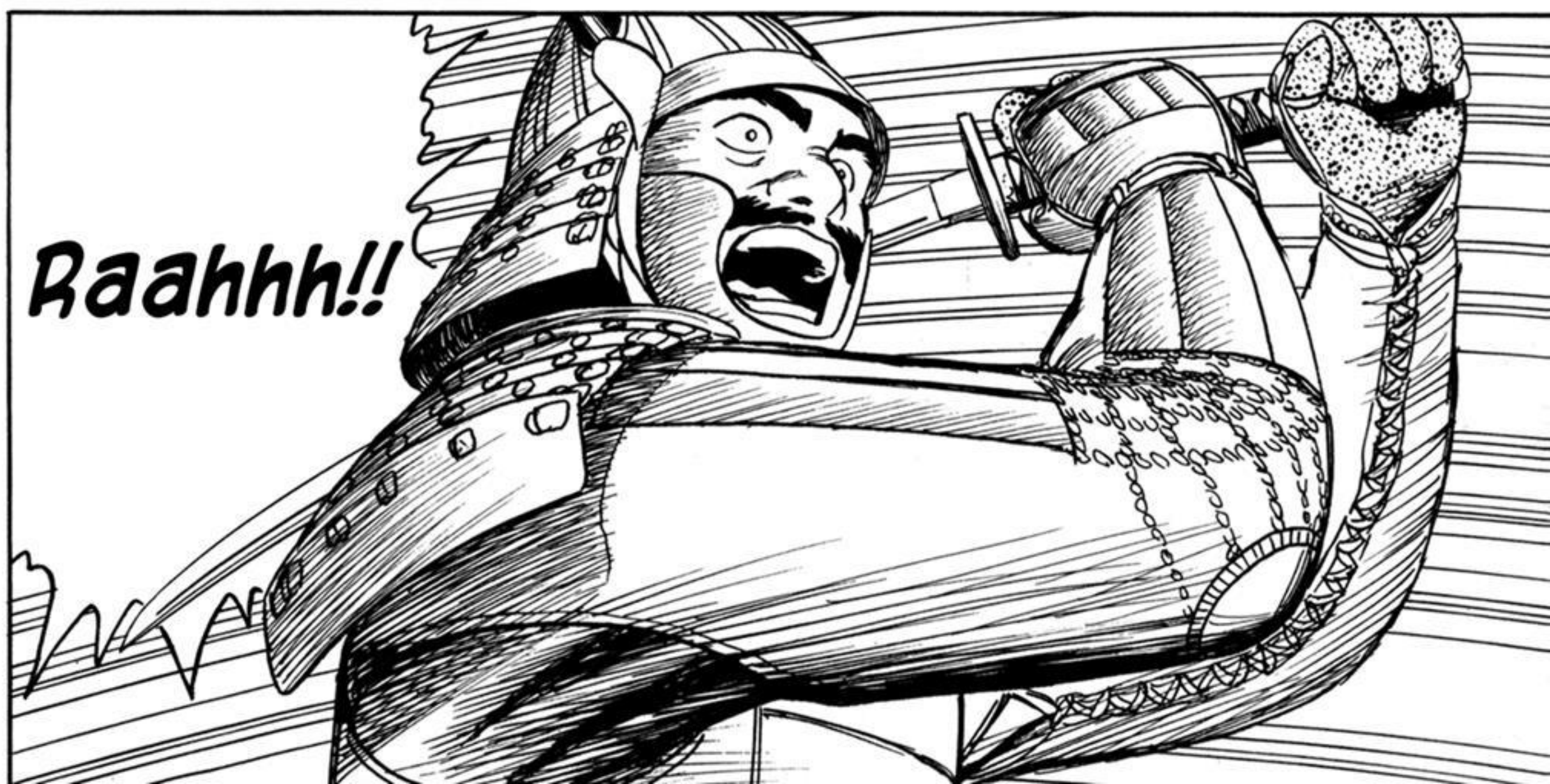
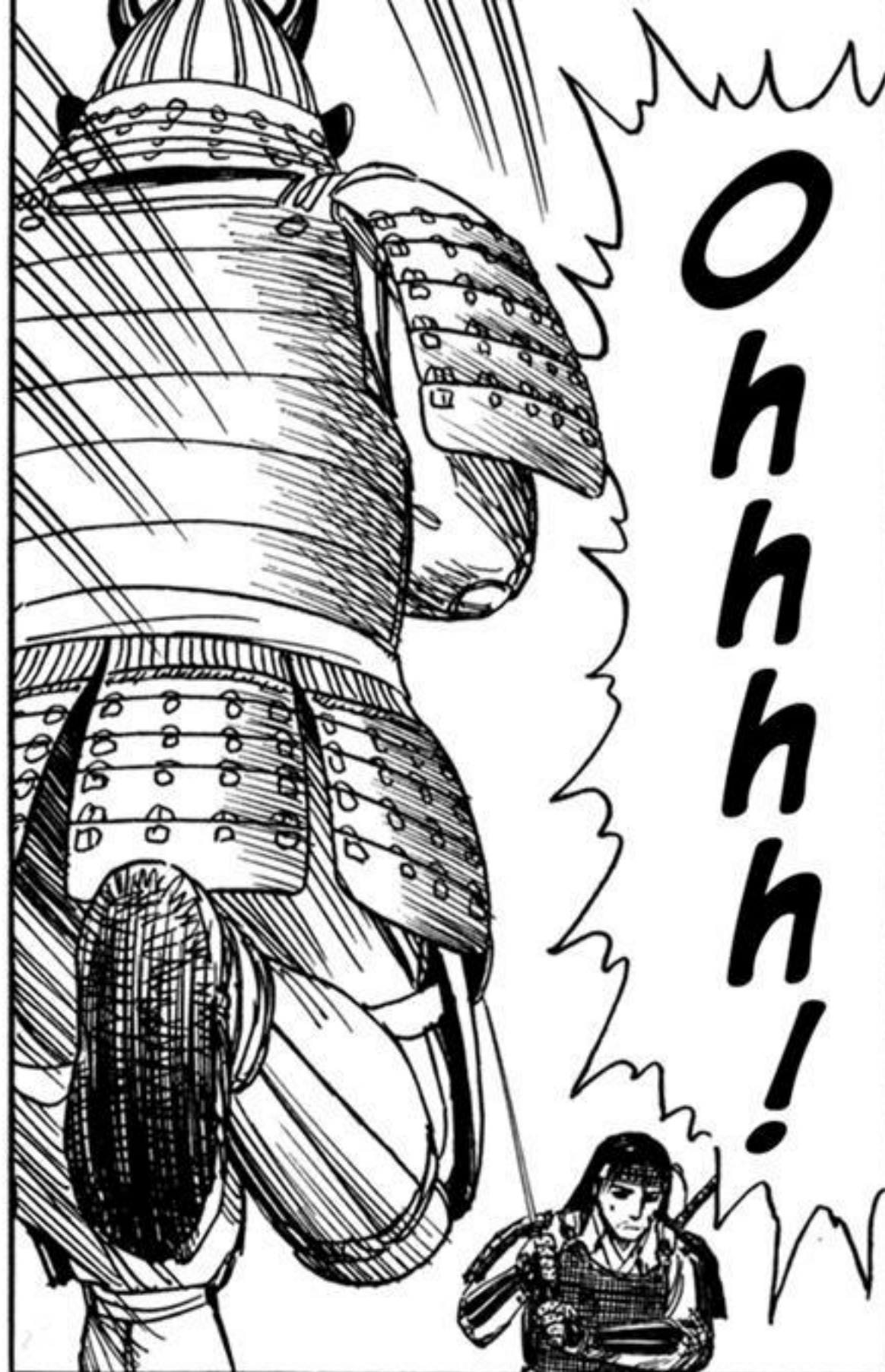


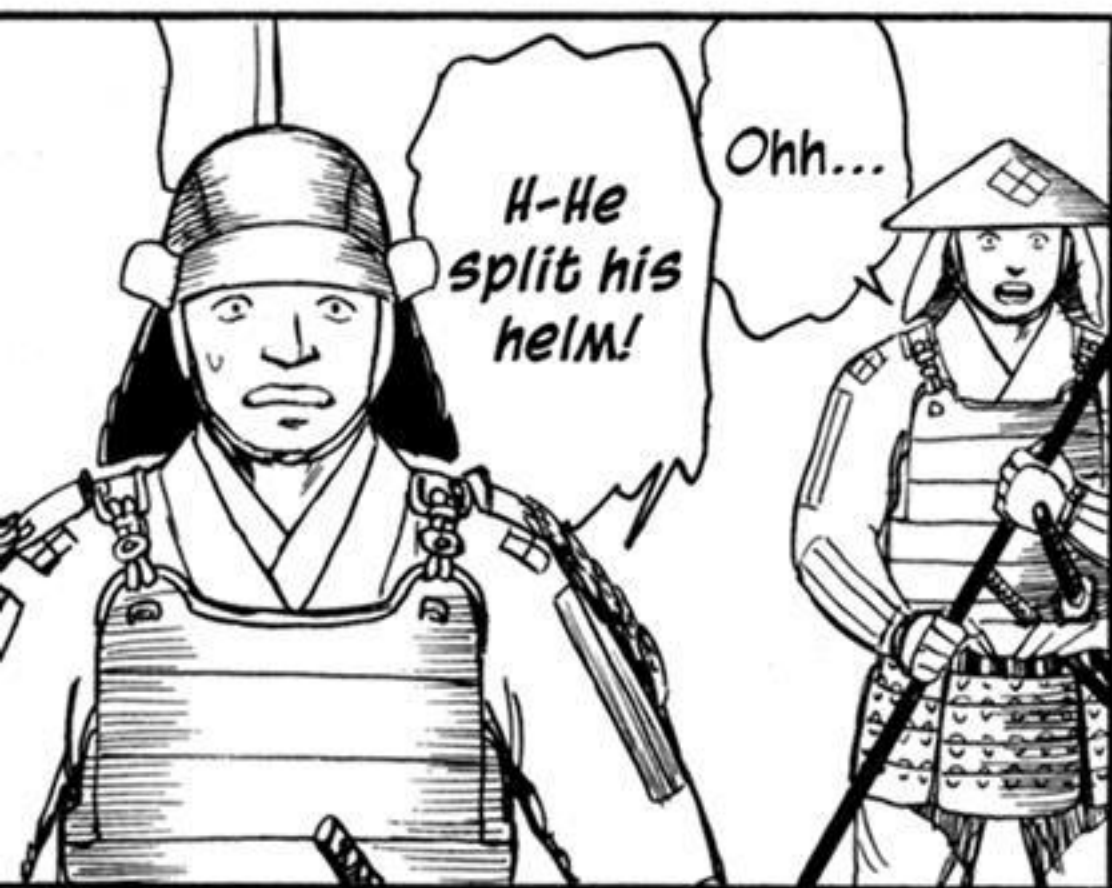
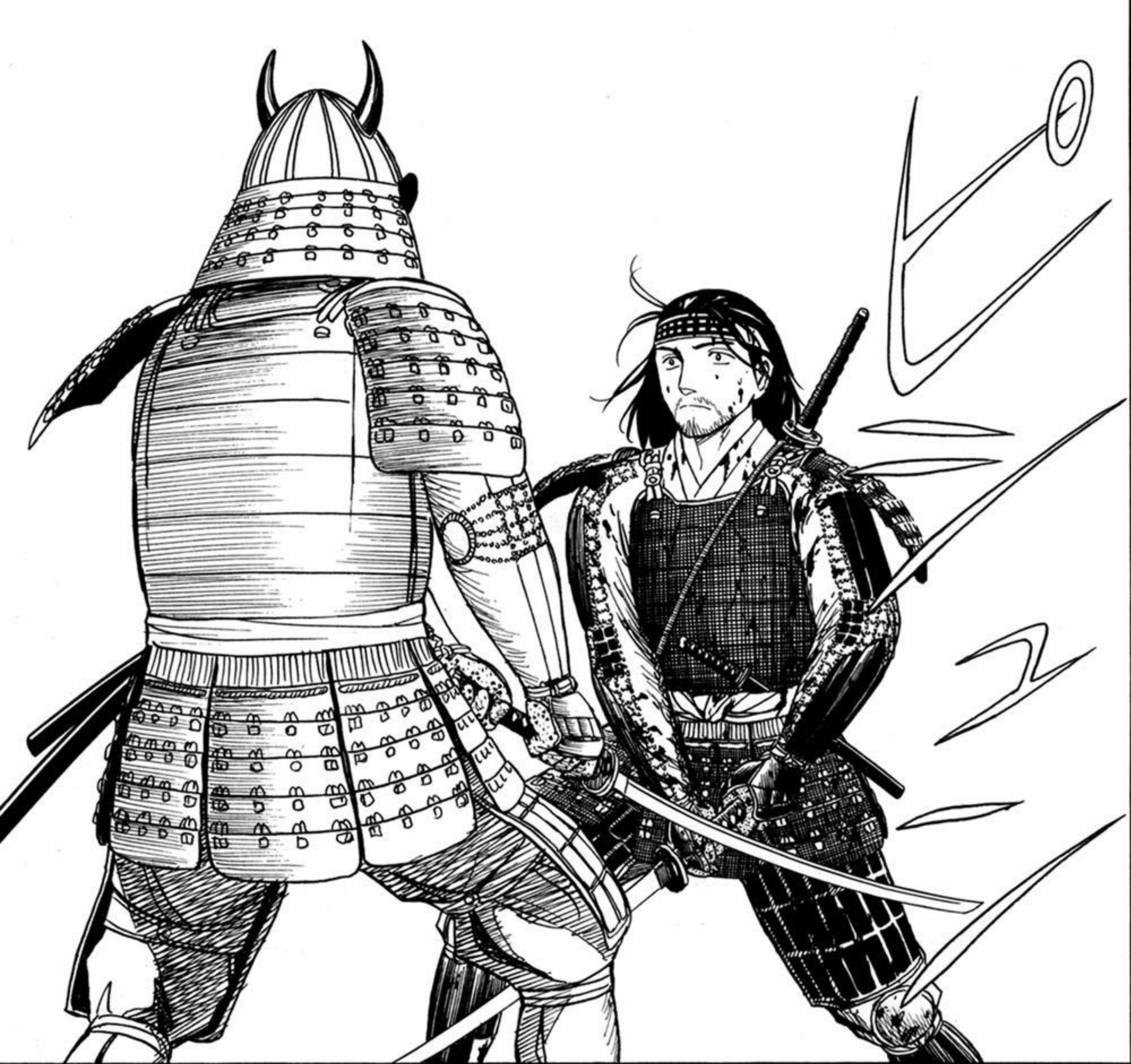


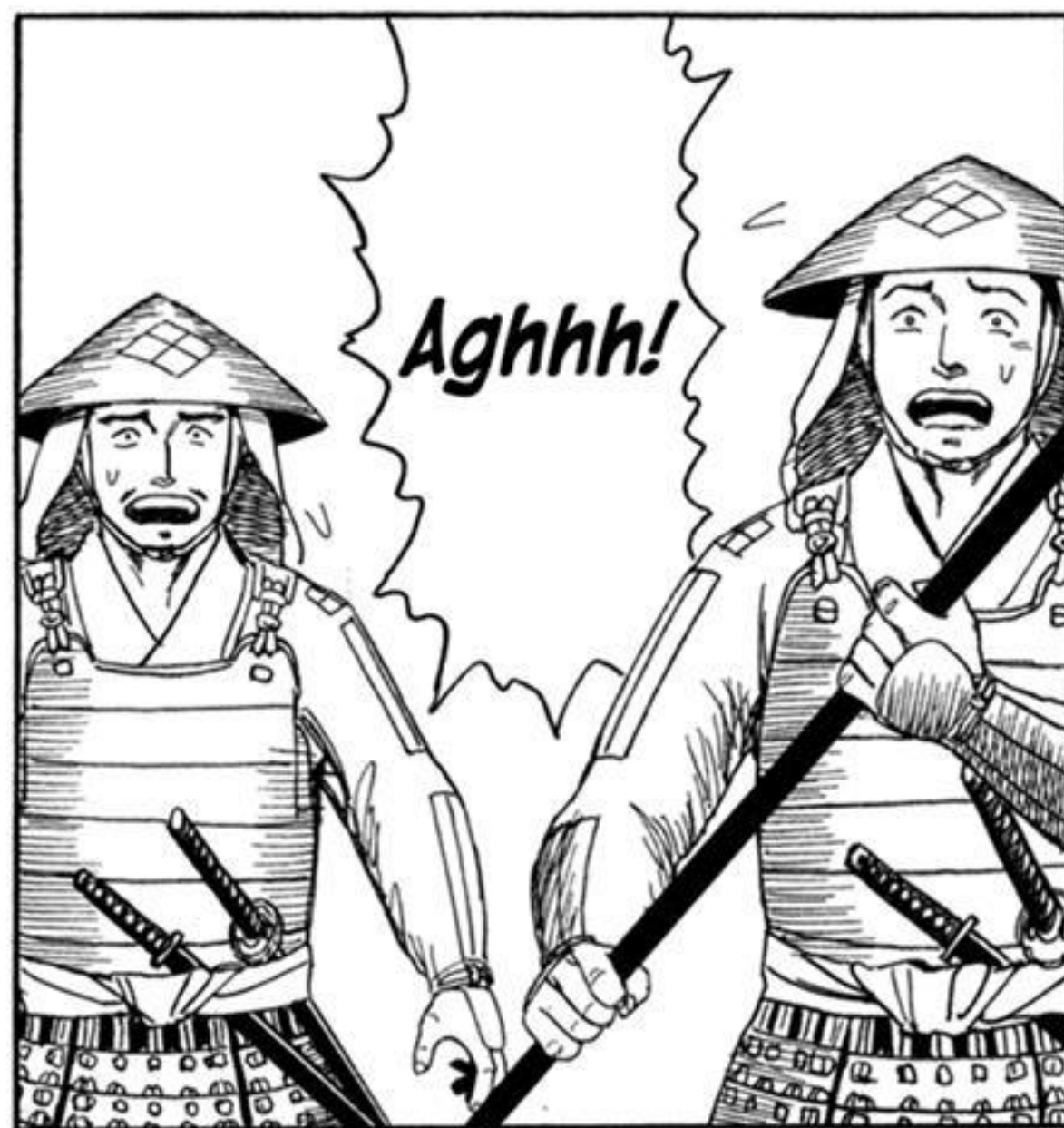
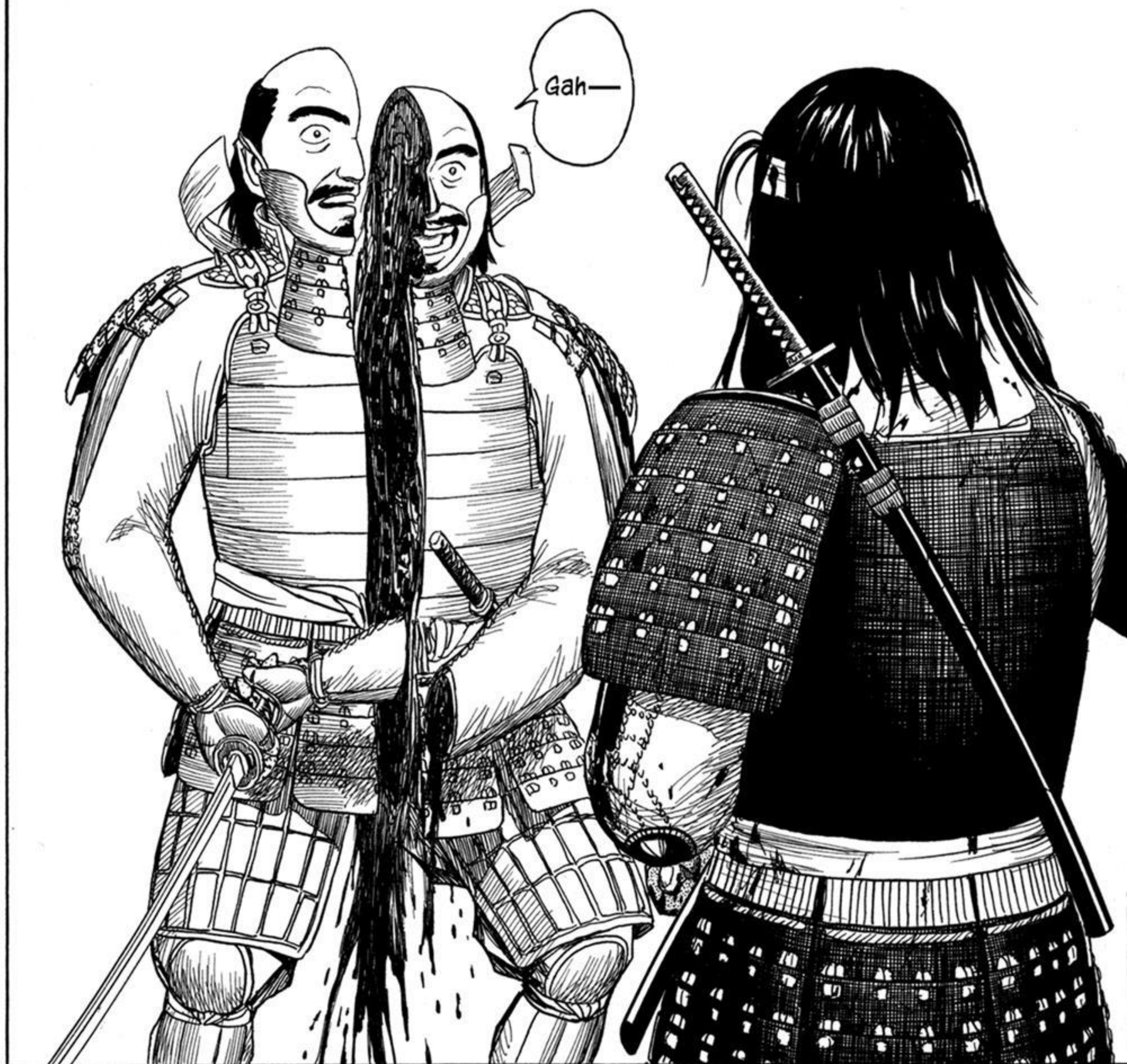




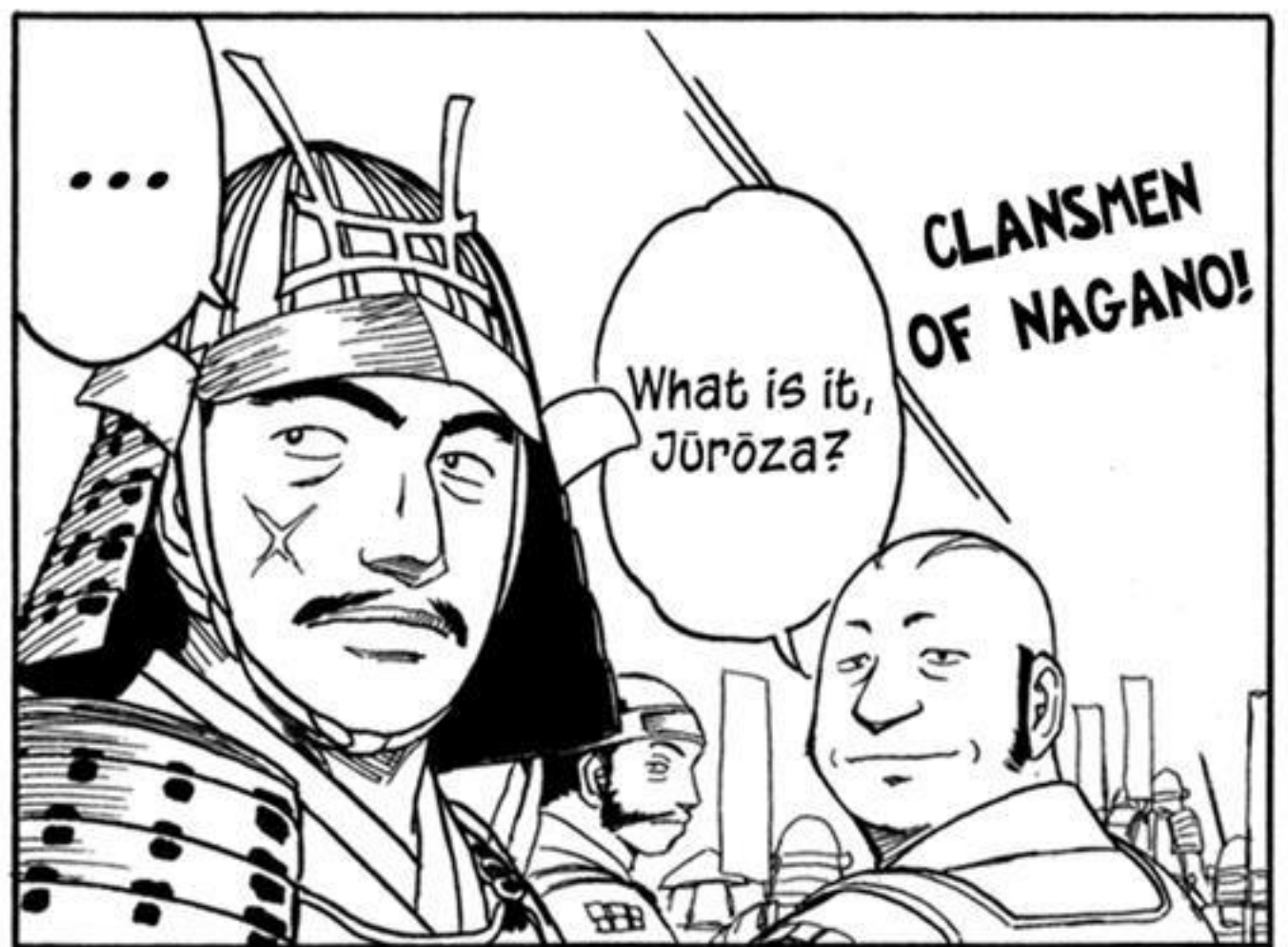














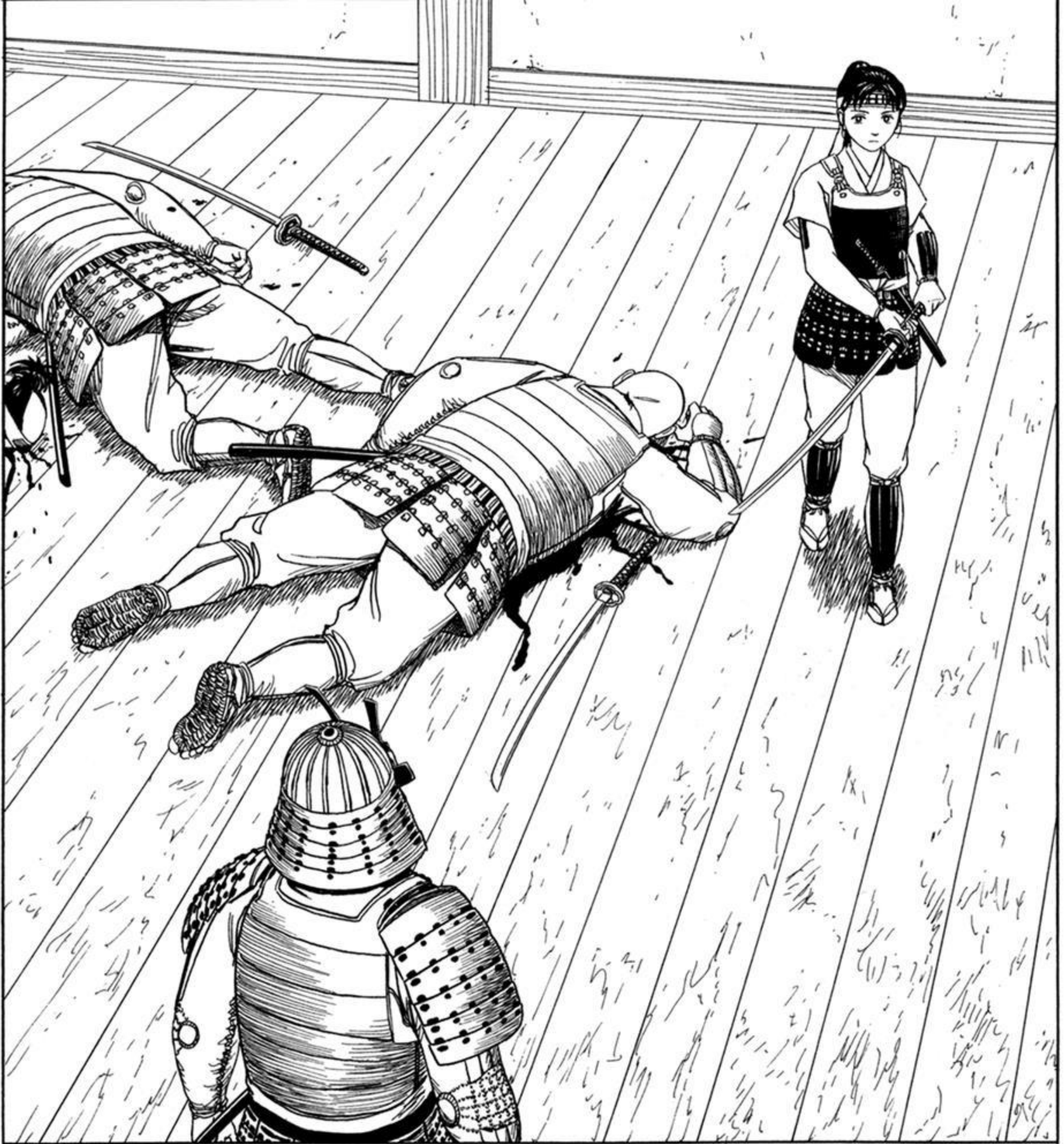




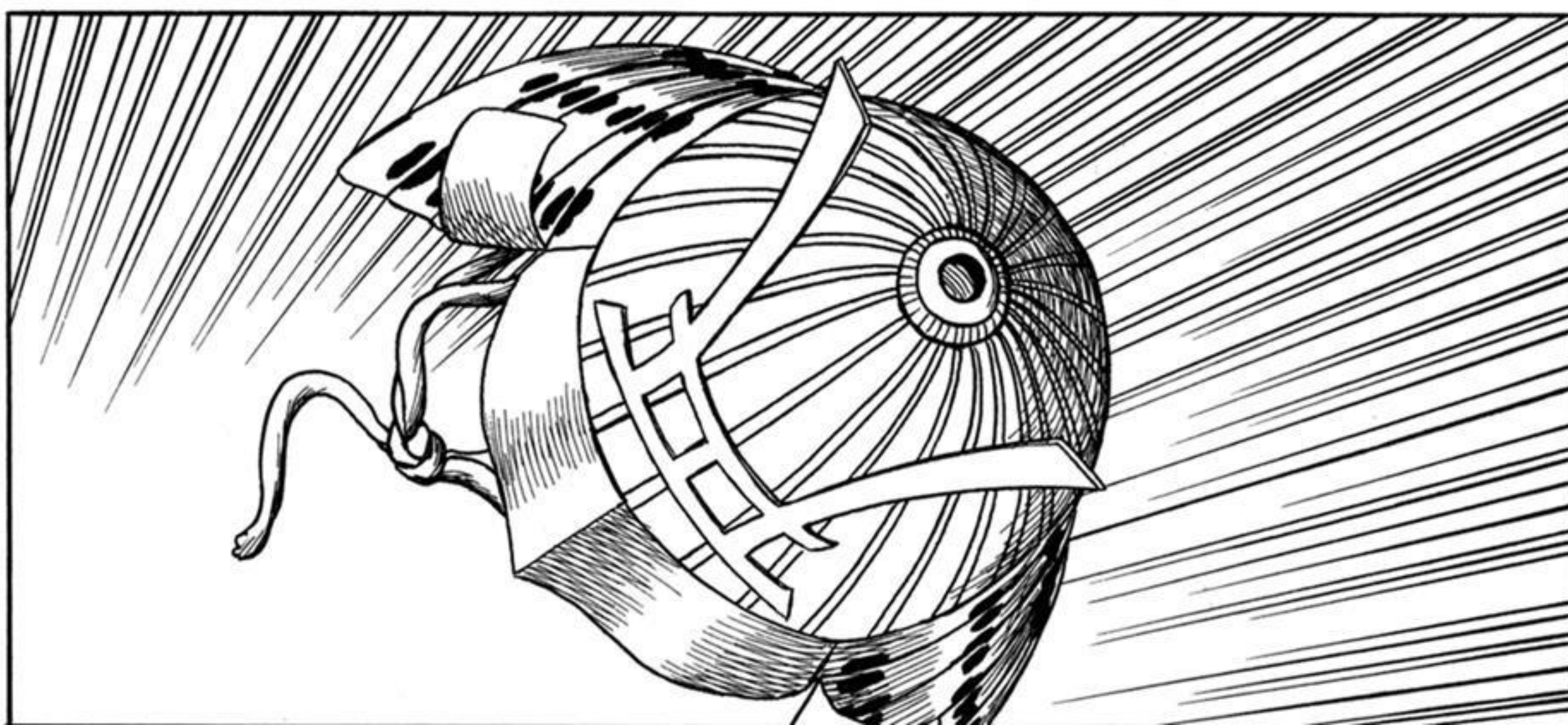


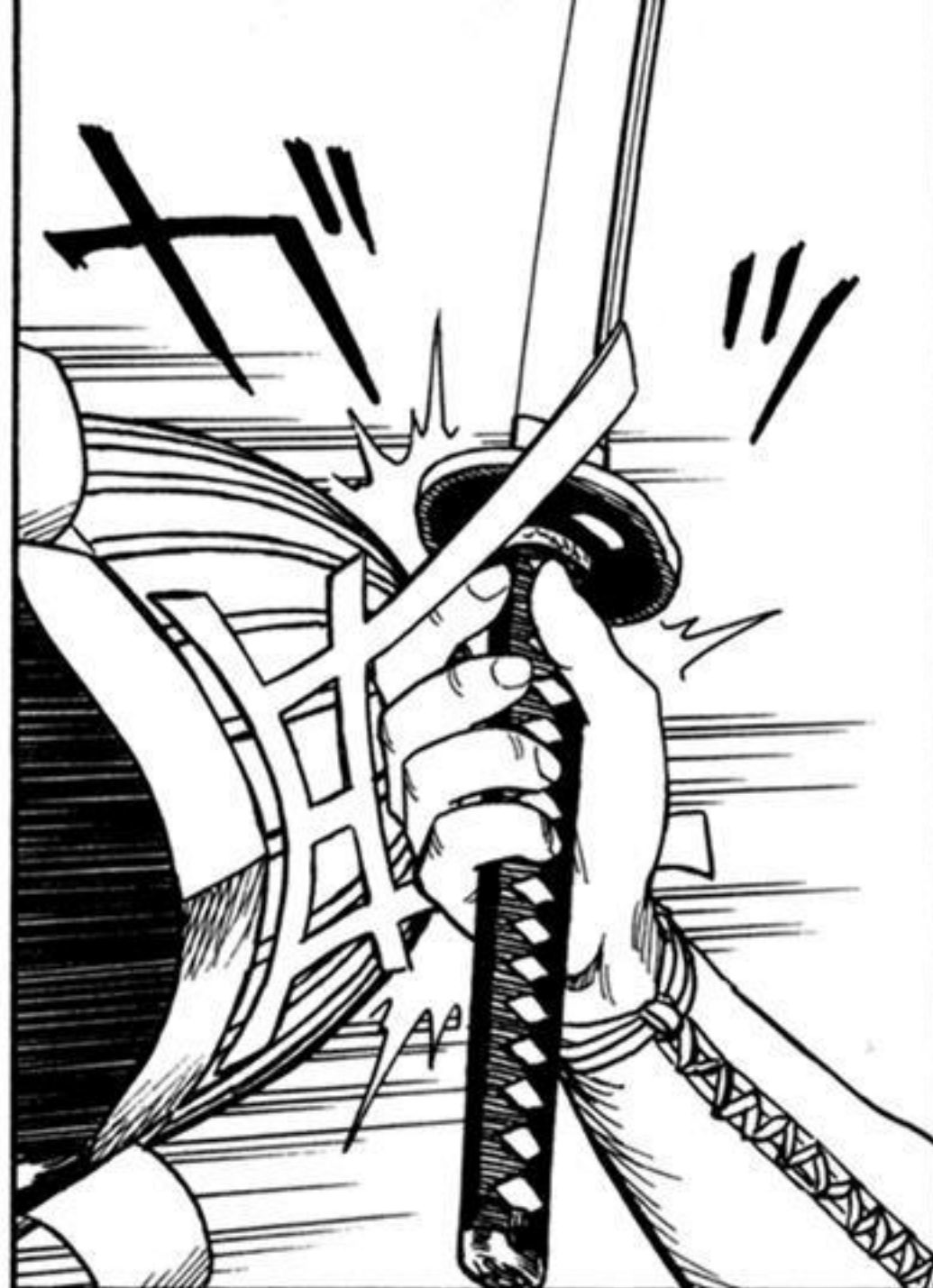
Chapter 5: Game

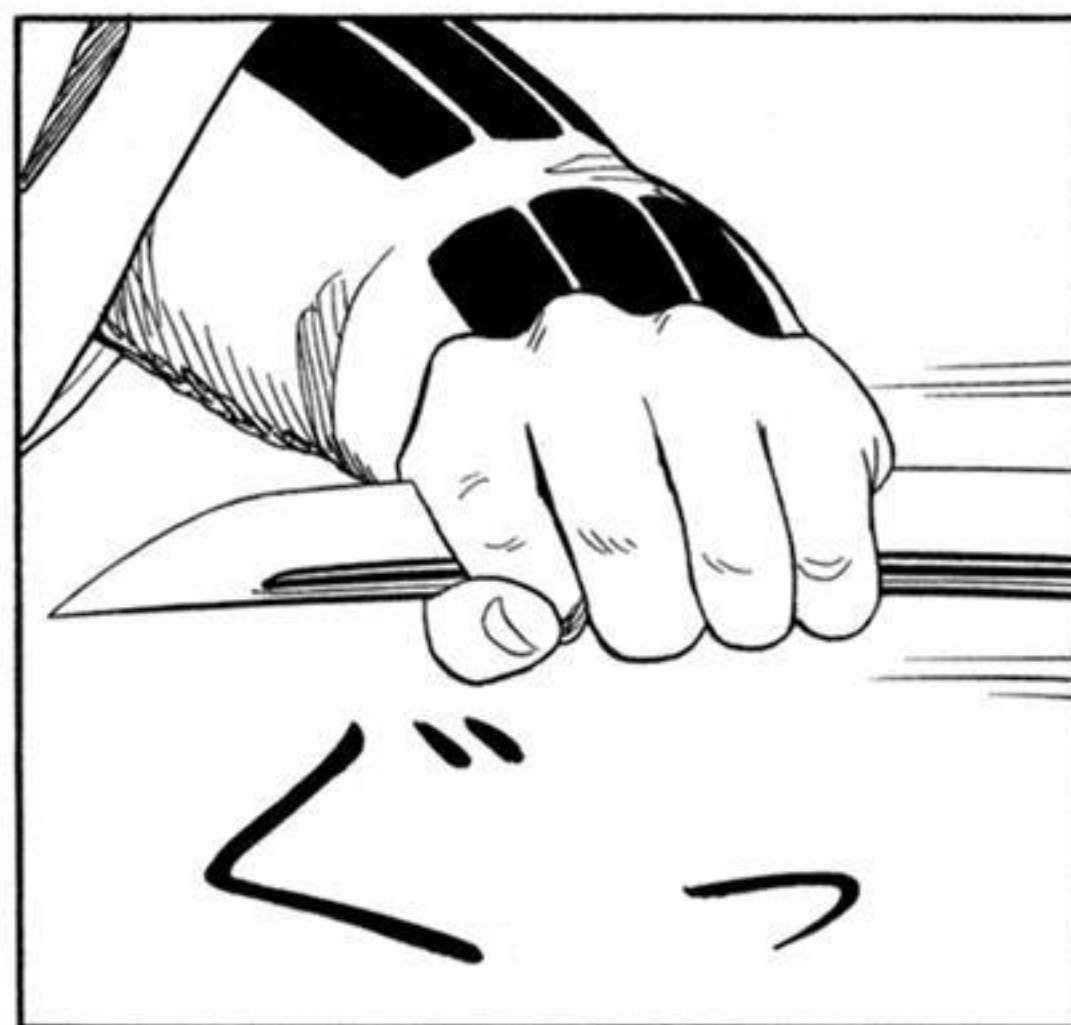
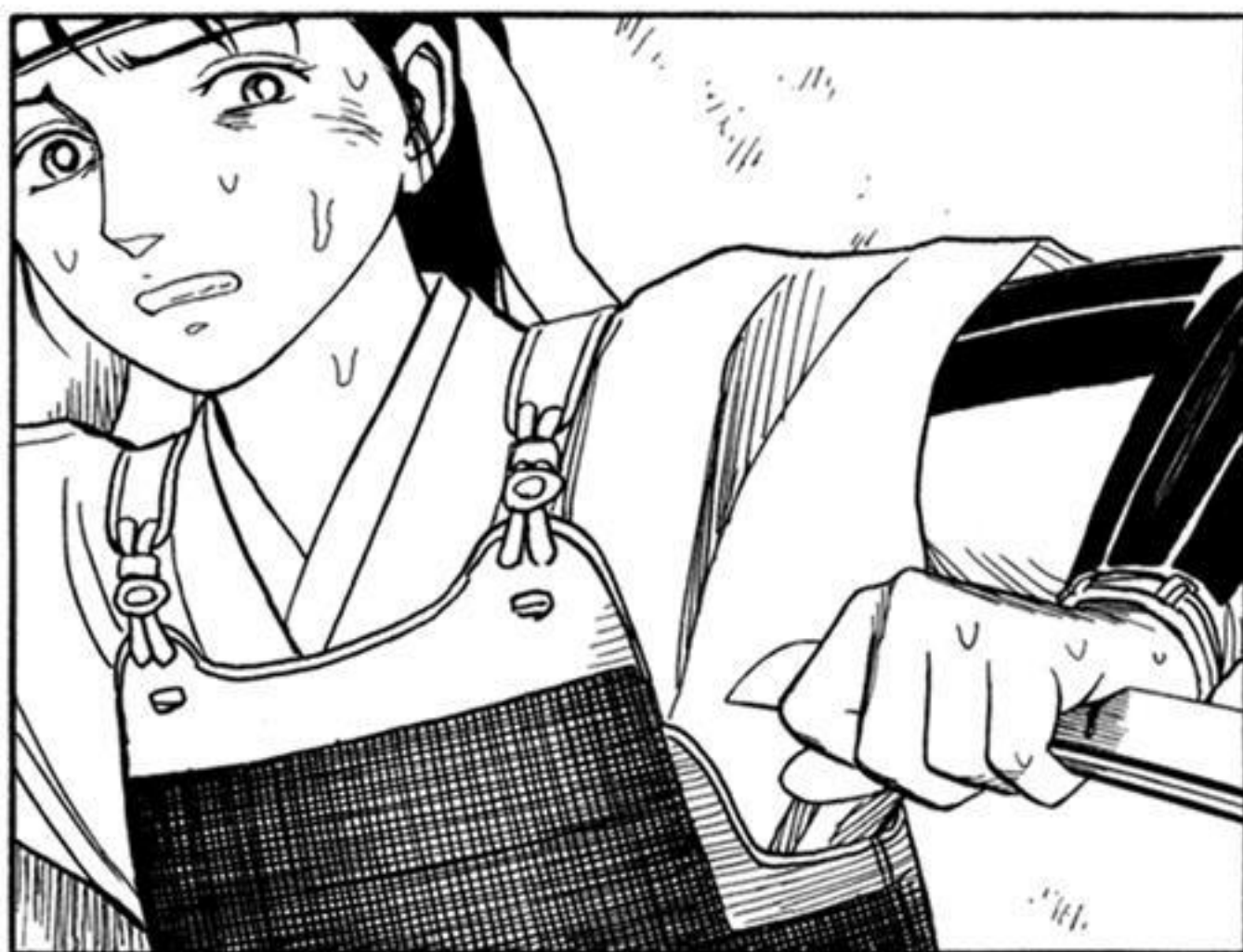
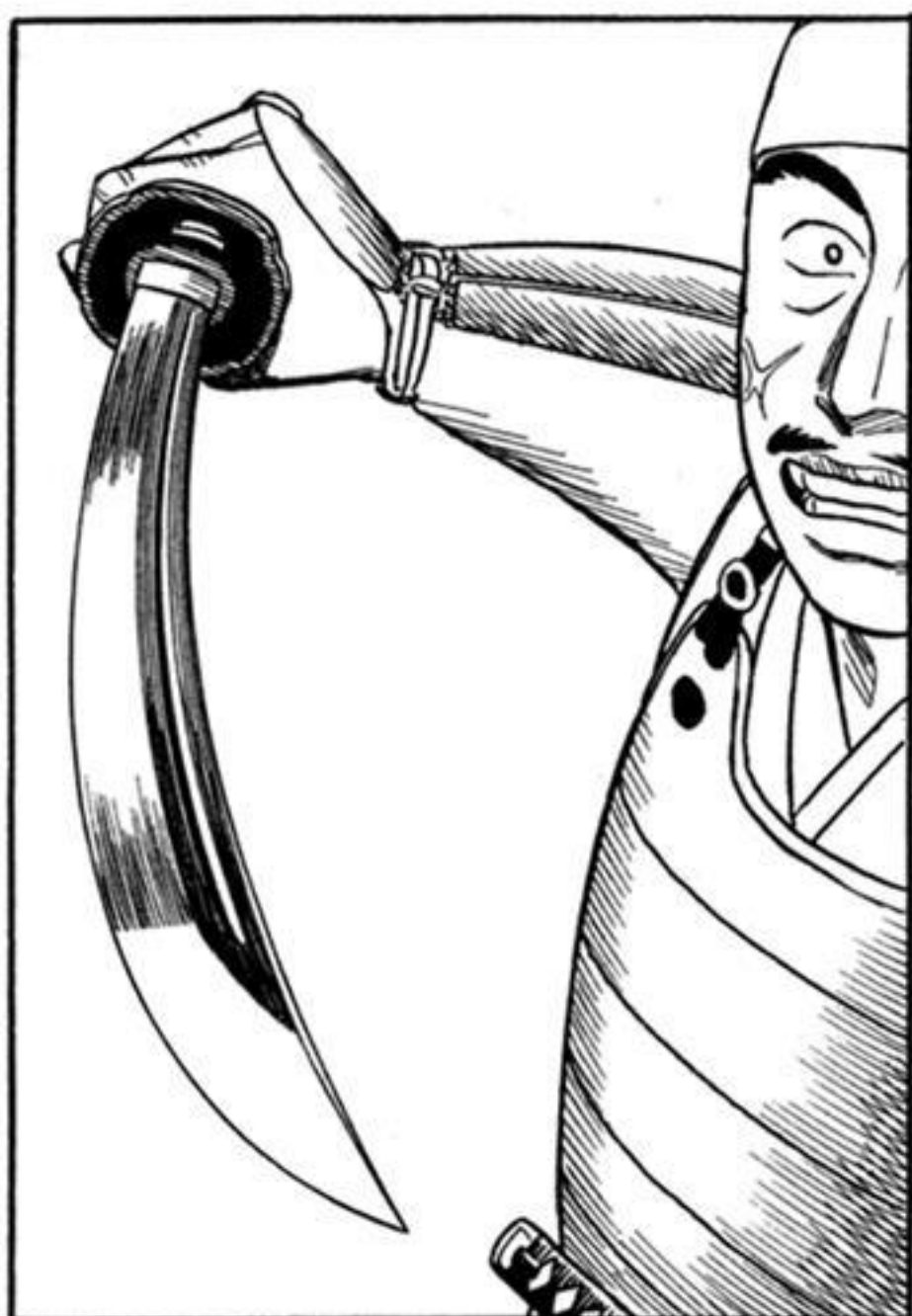


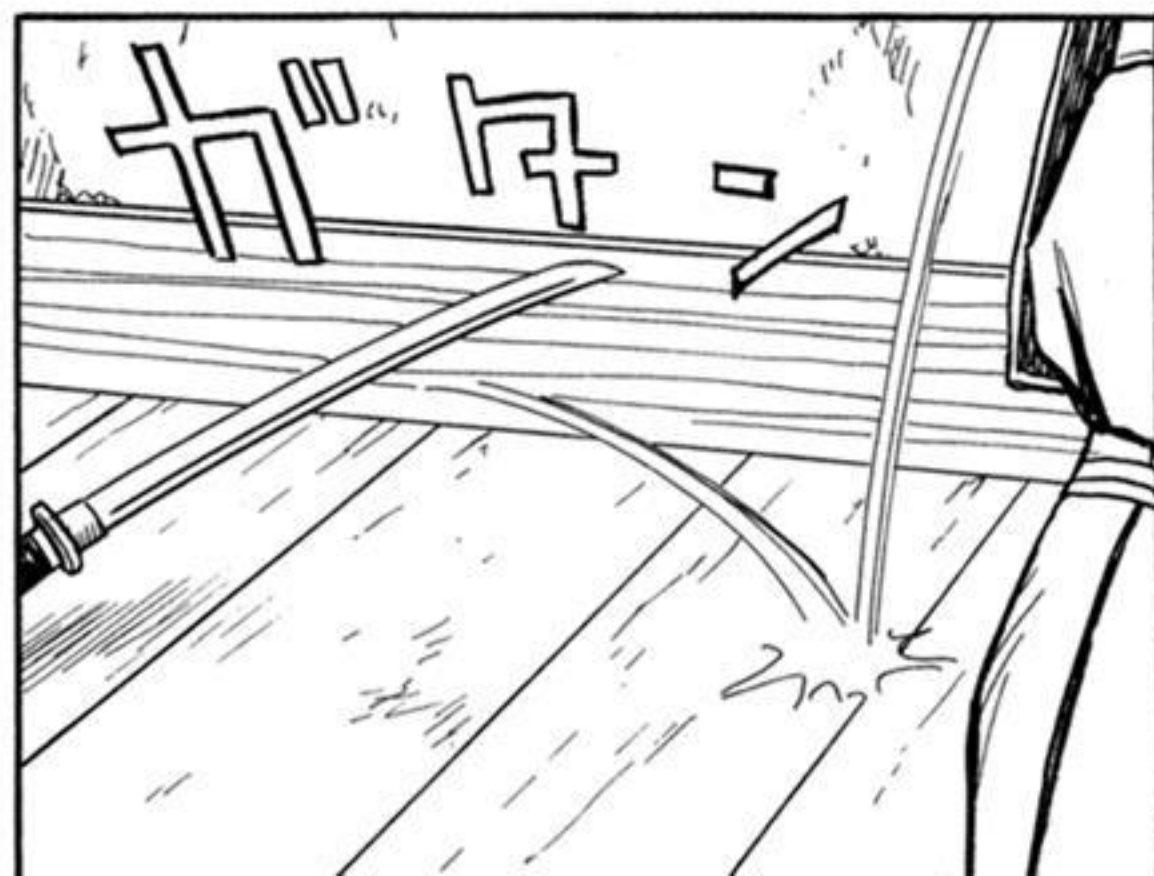
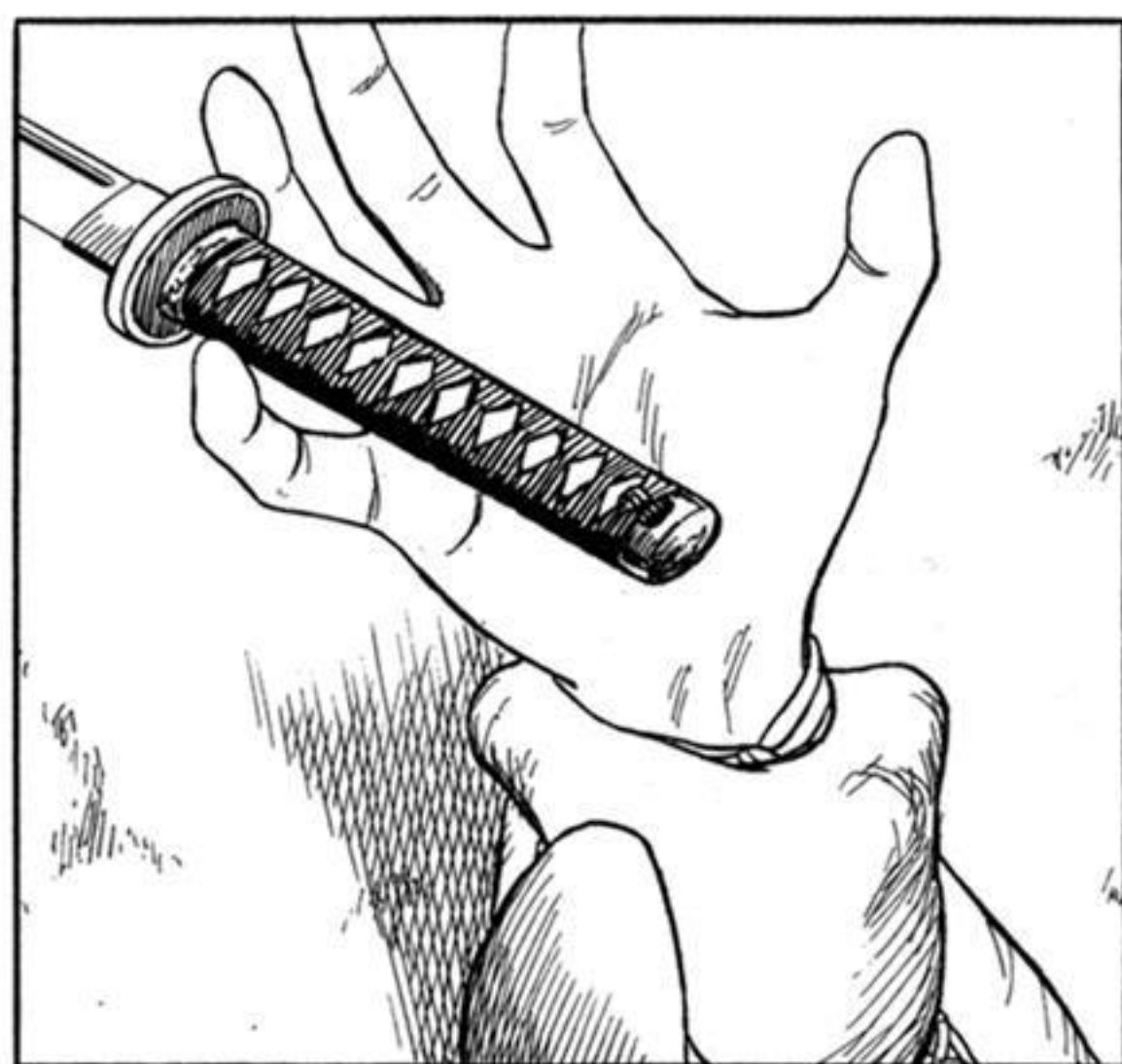


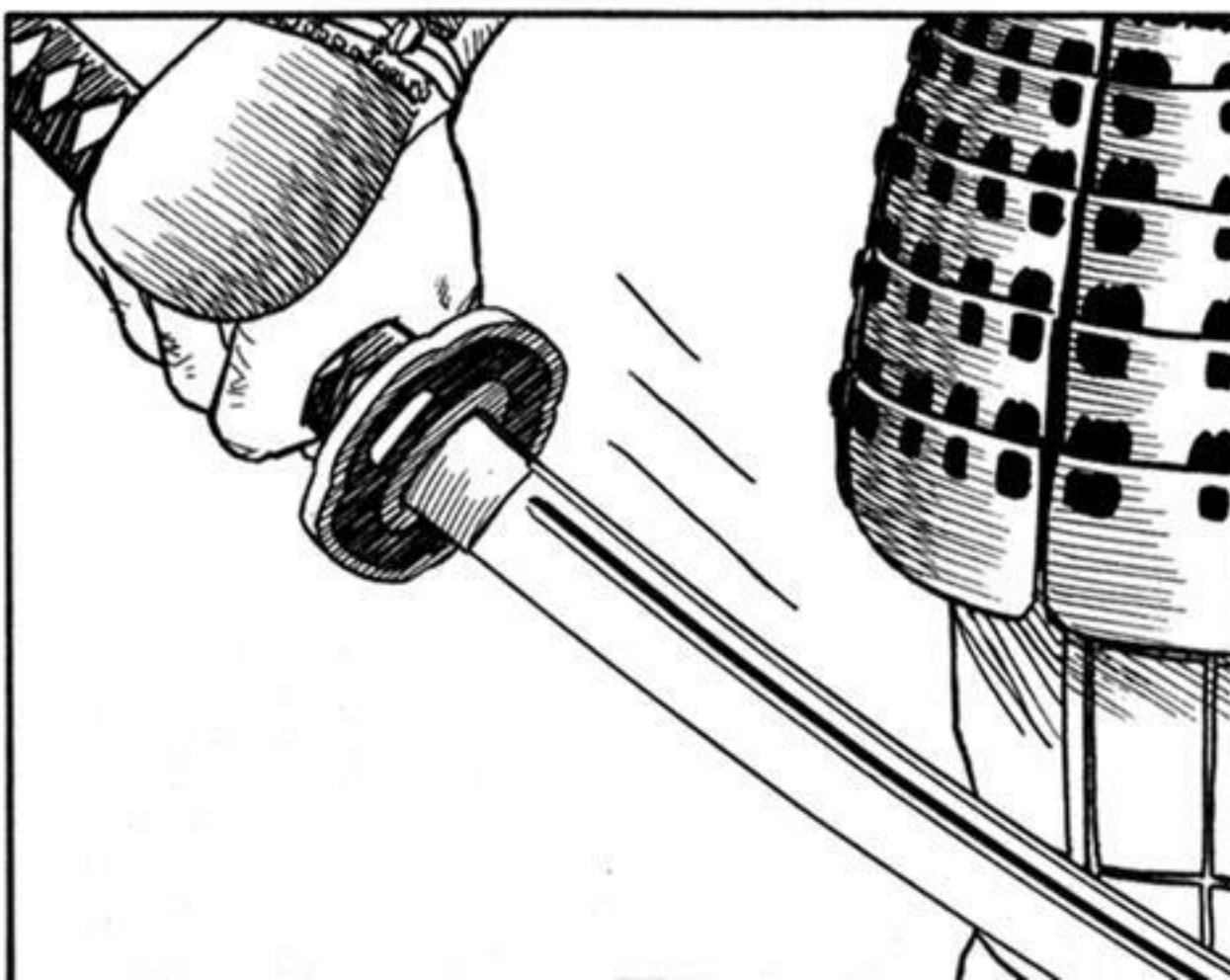
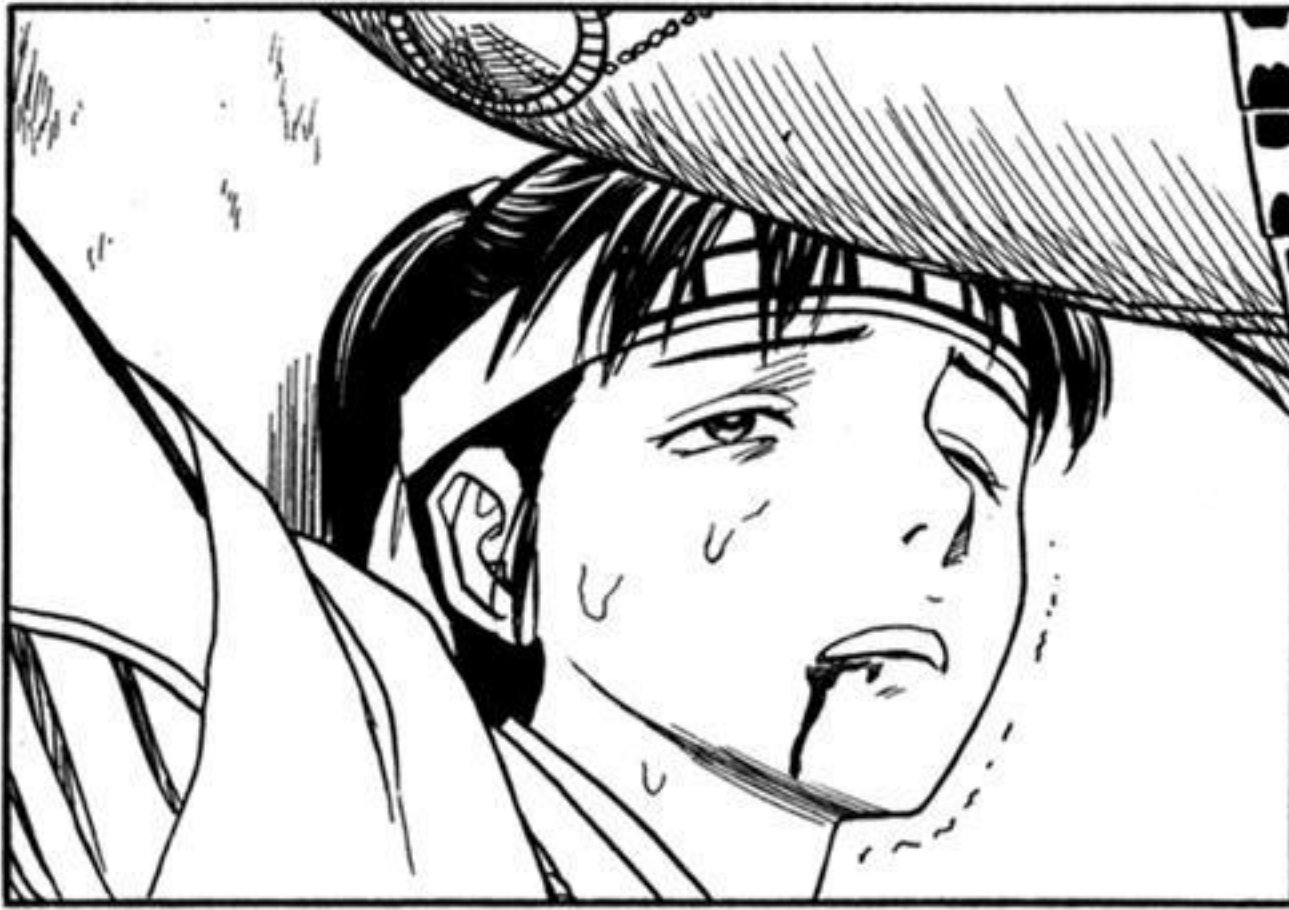


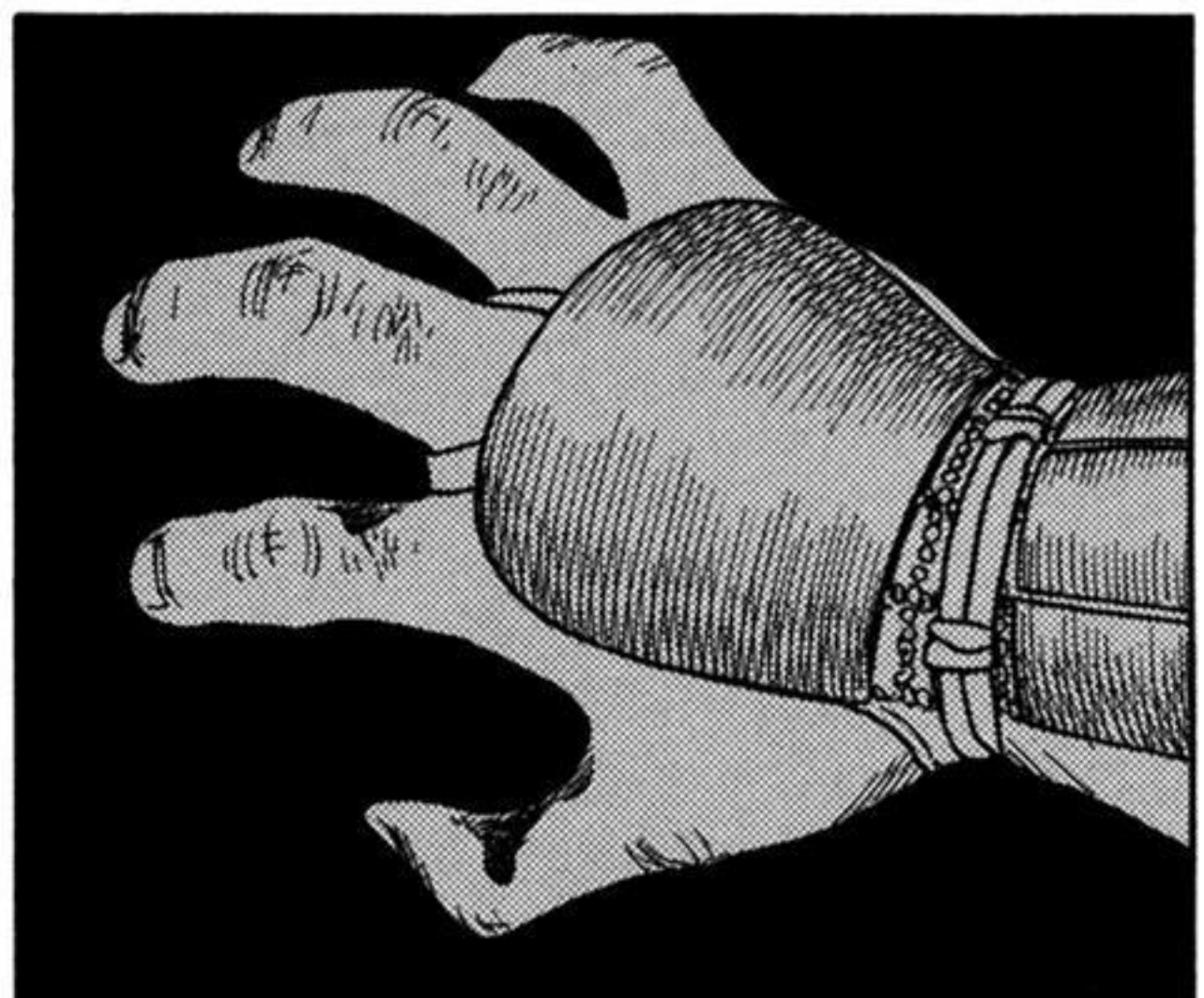
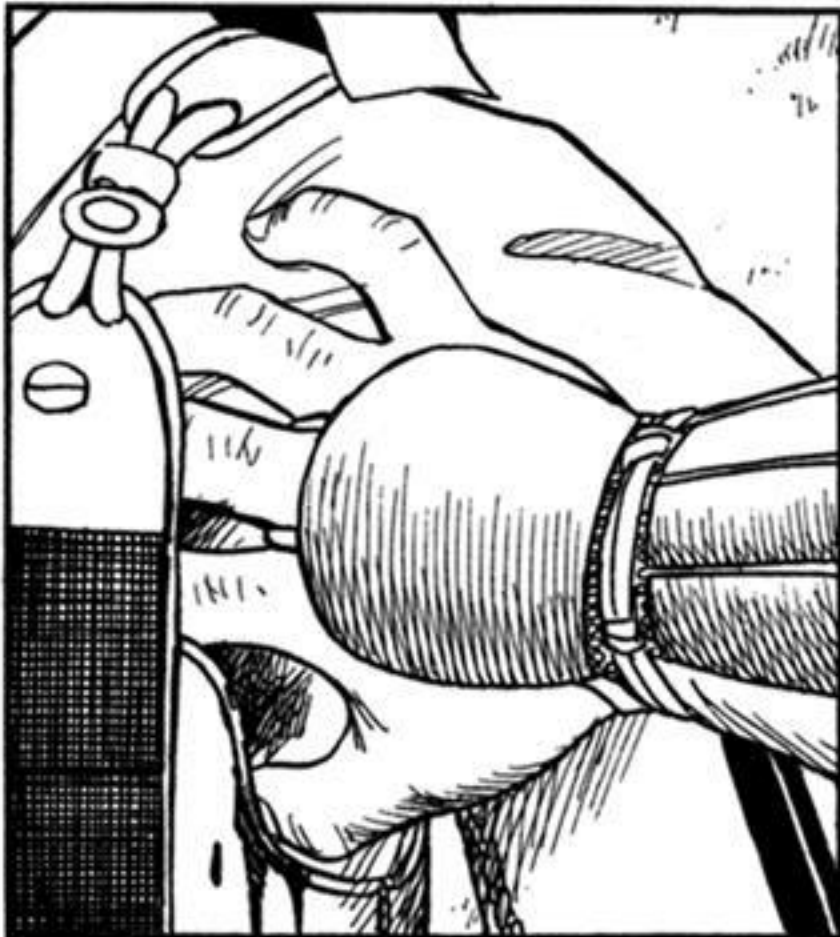
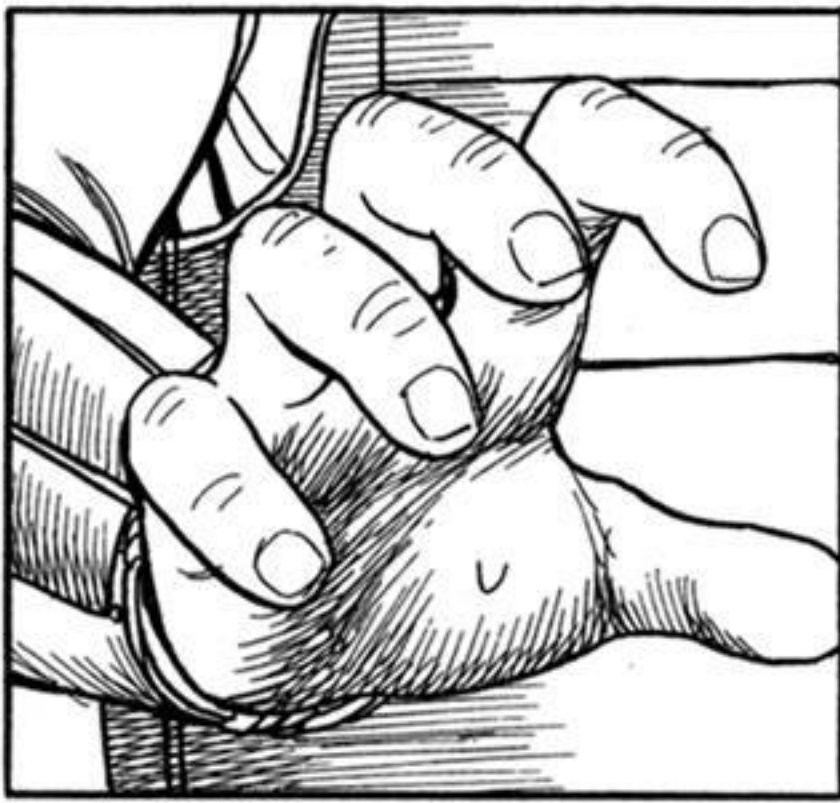


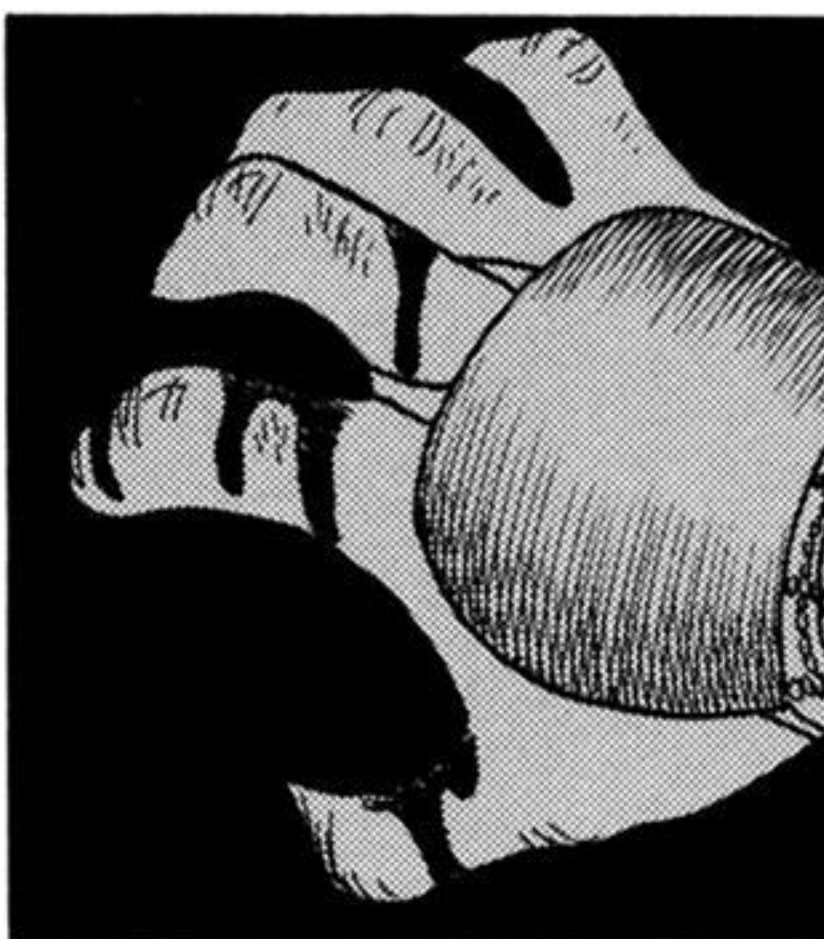
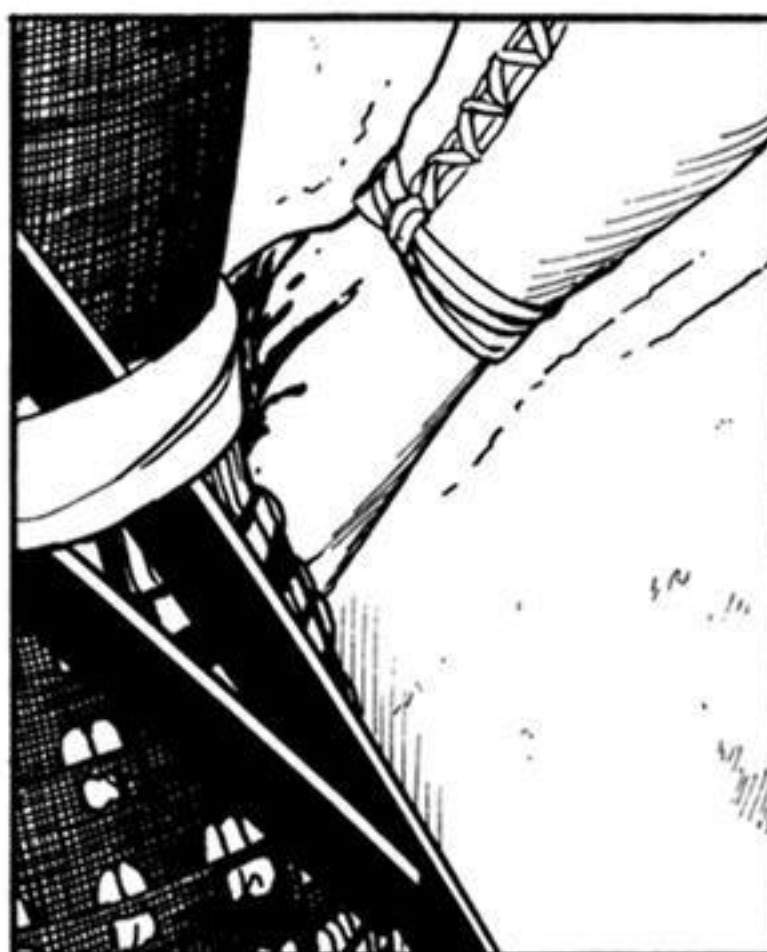










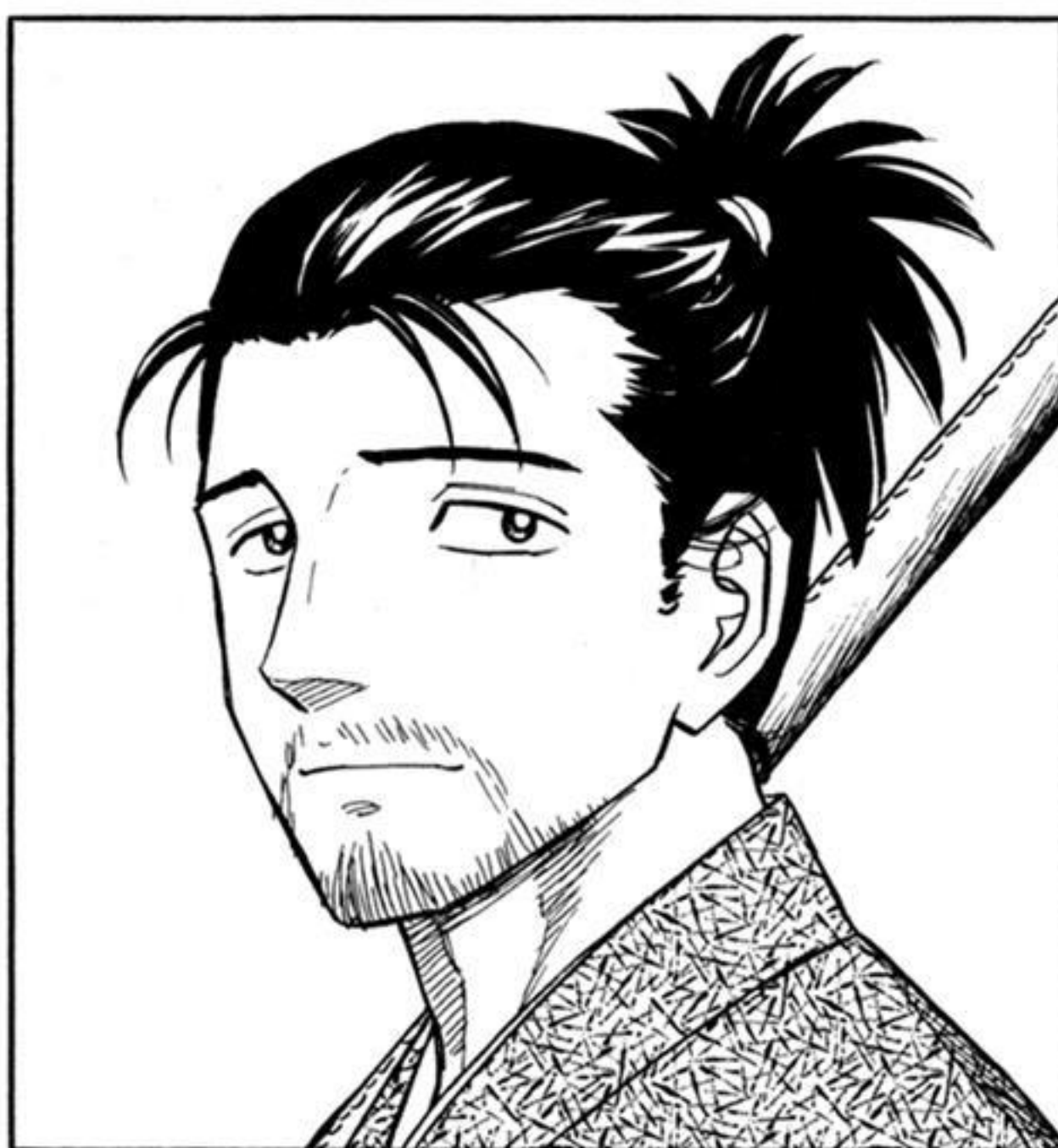
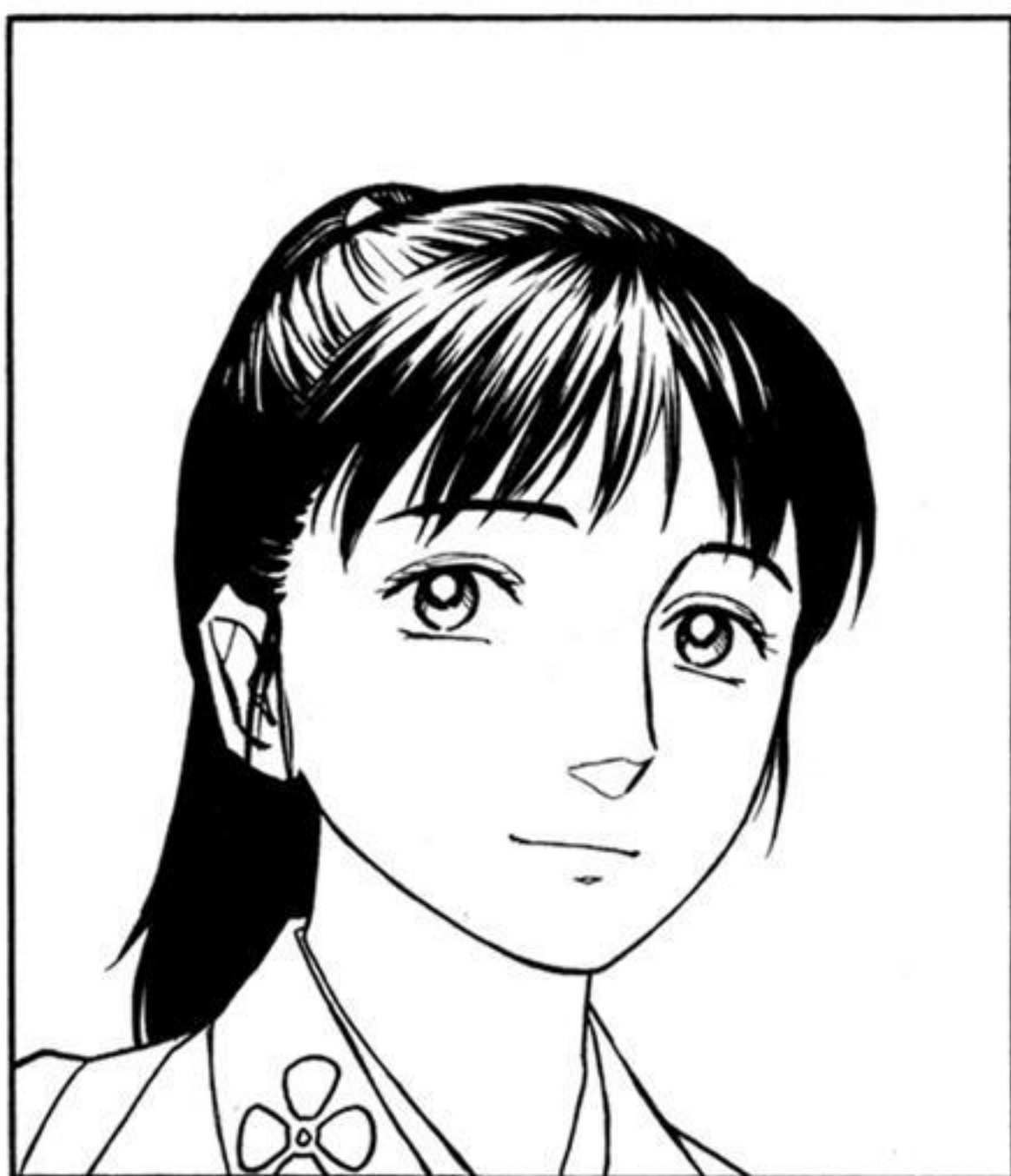


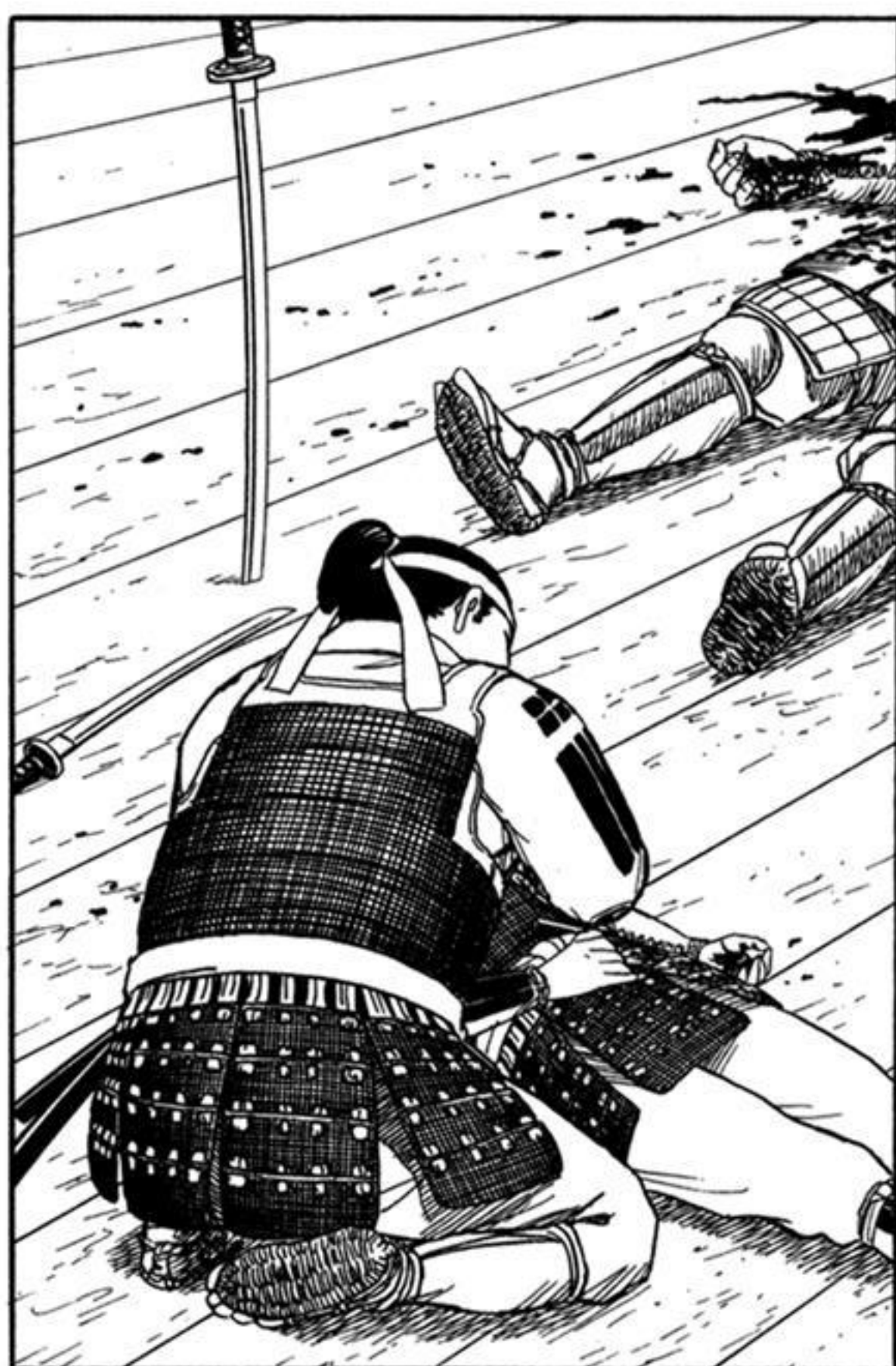








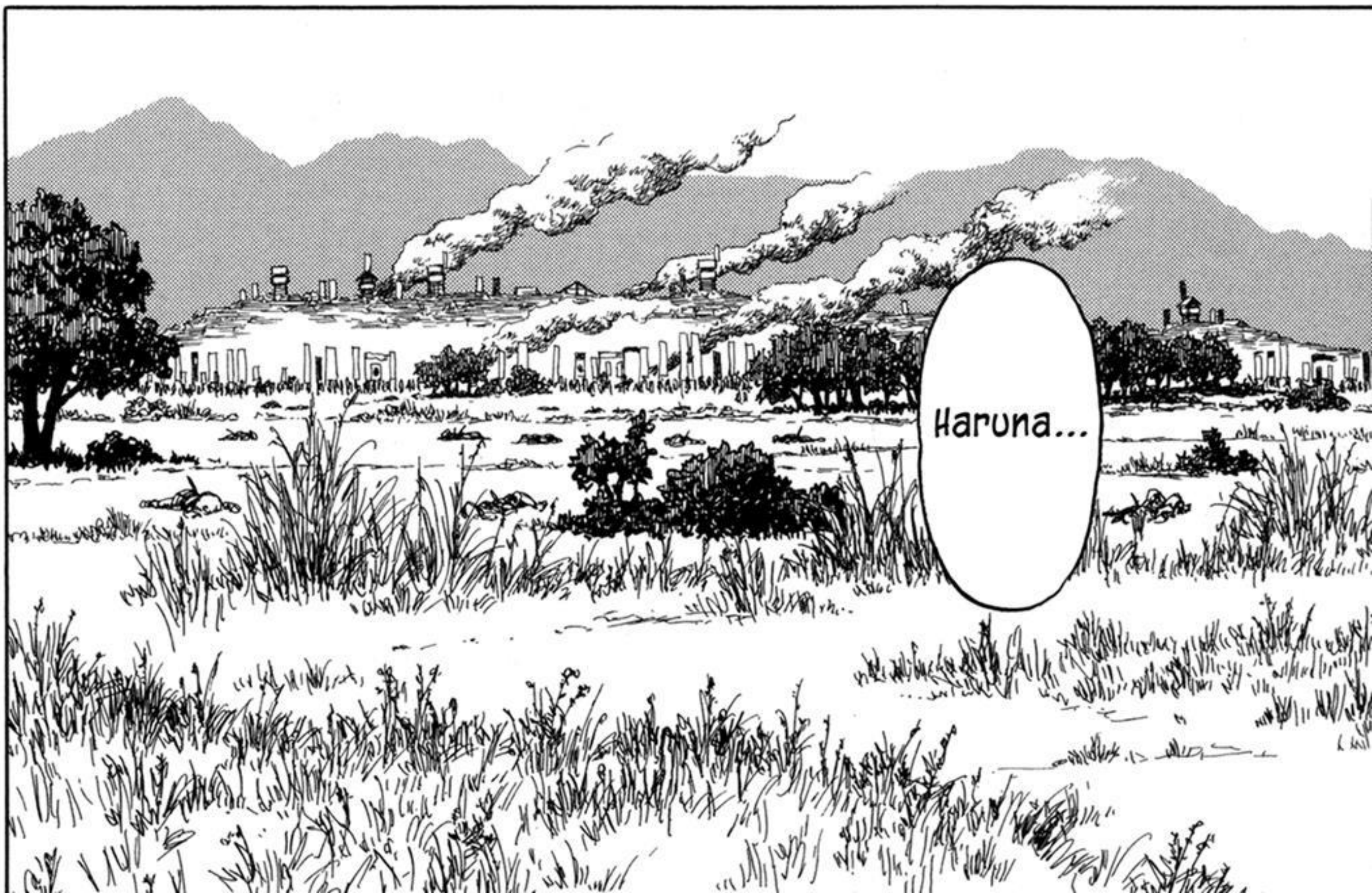
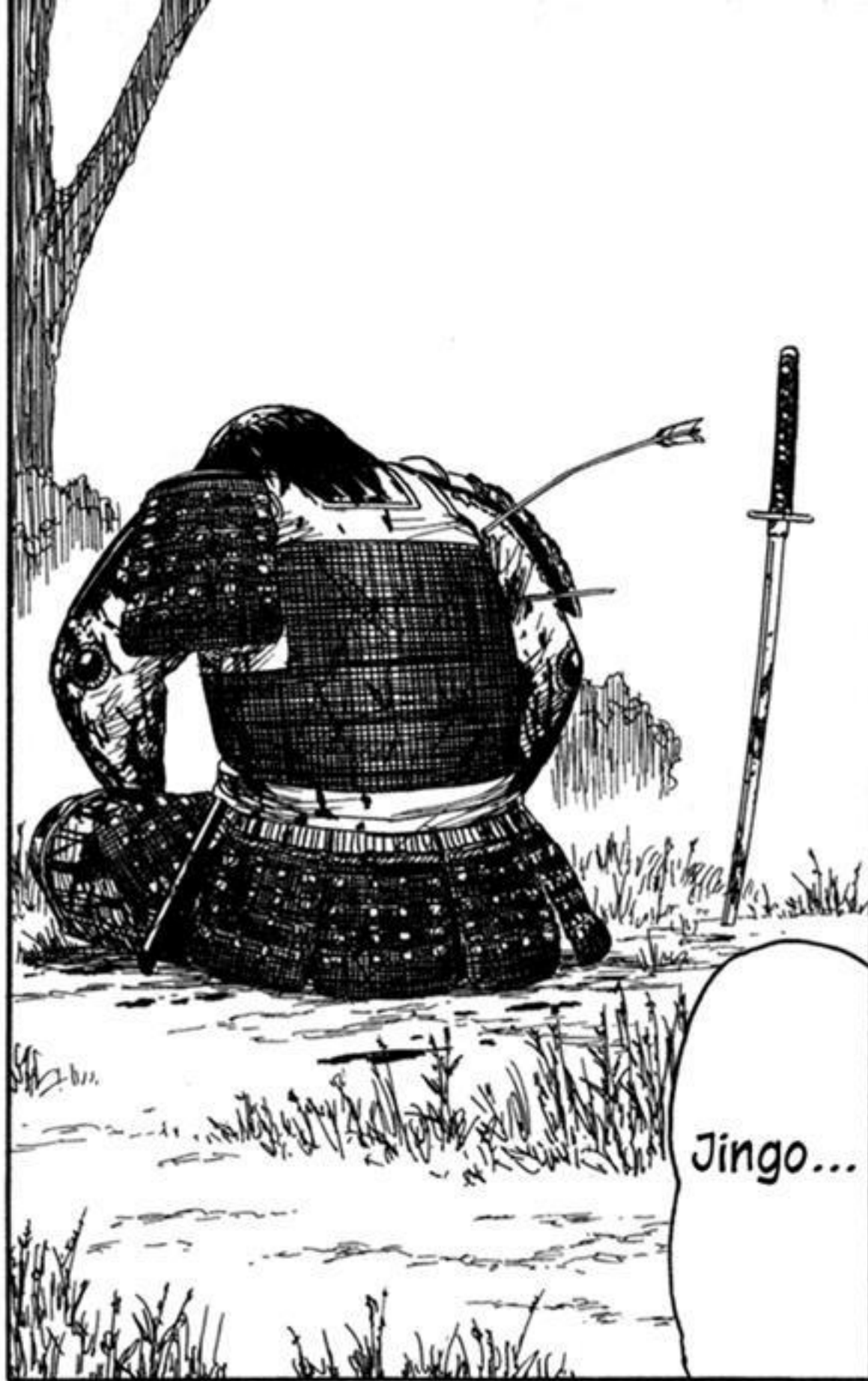






Did we...
break through
the besieging
enemy lines...?







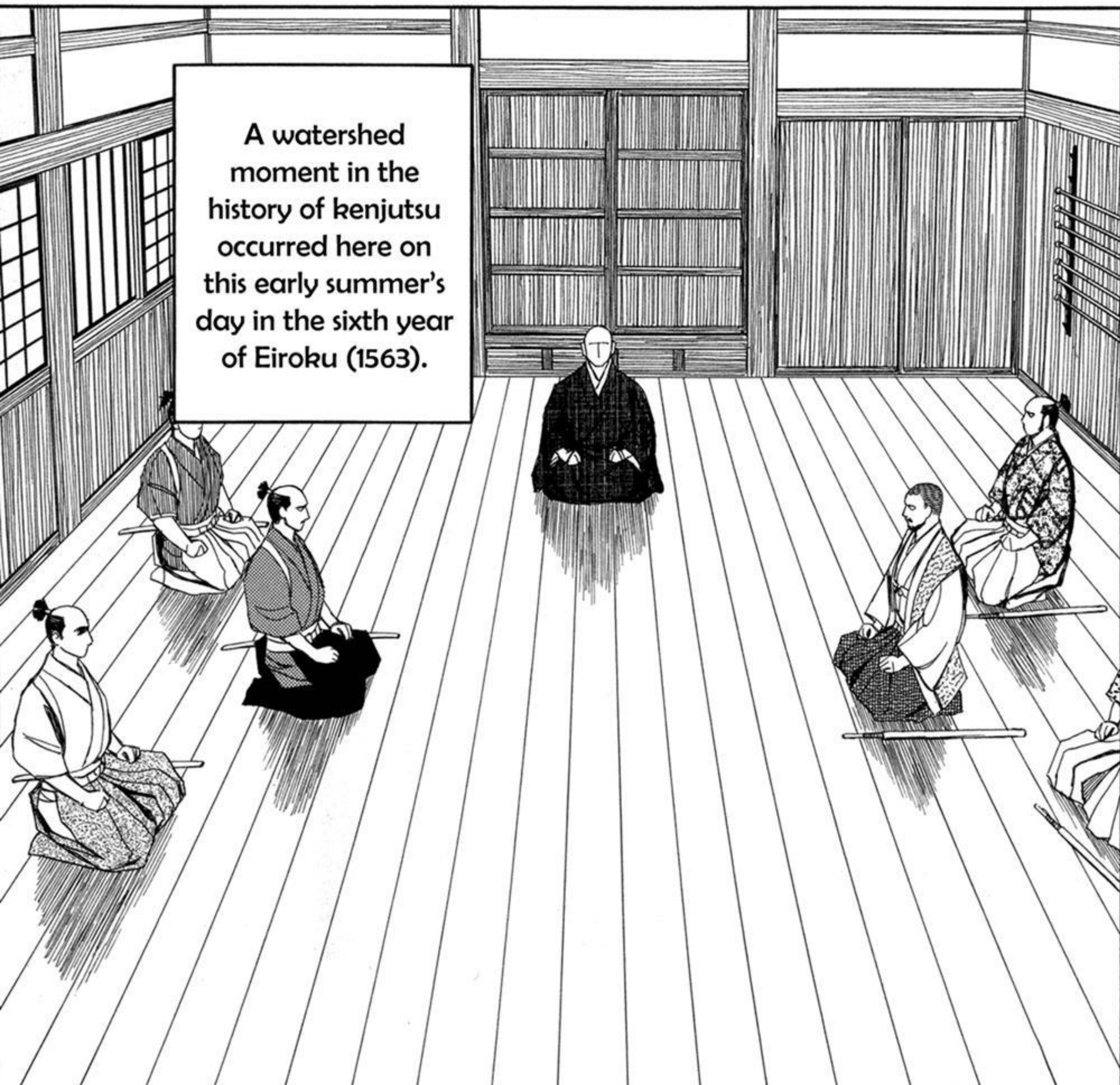




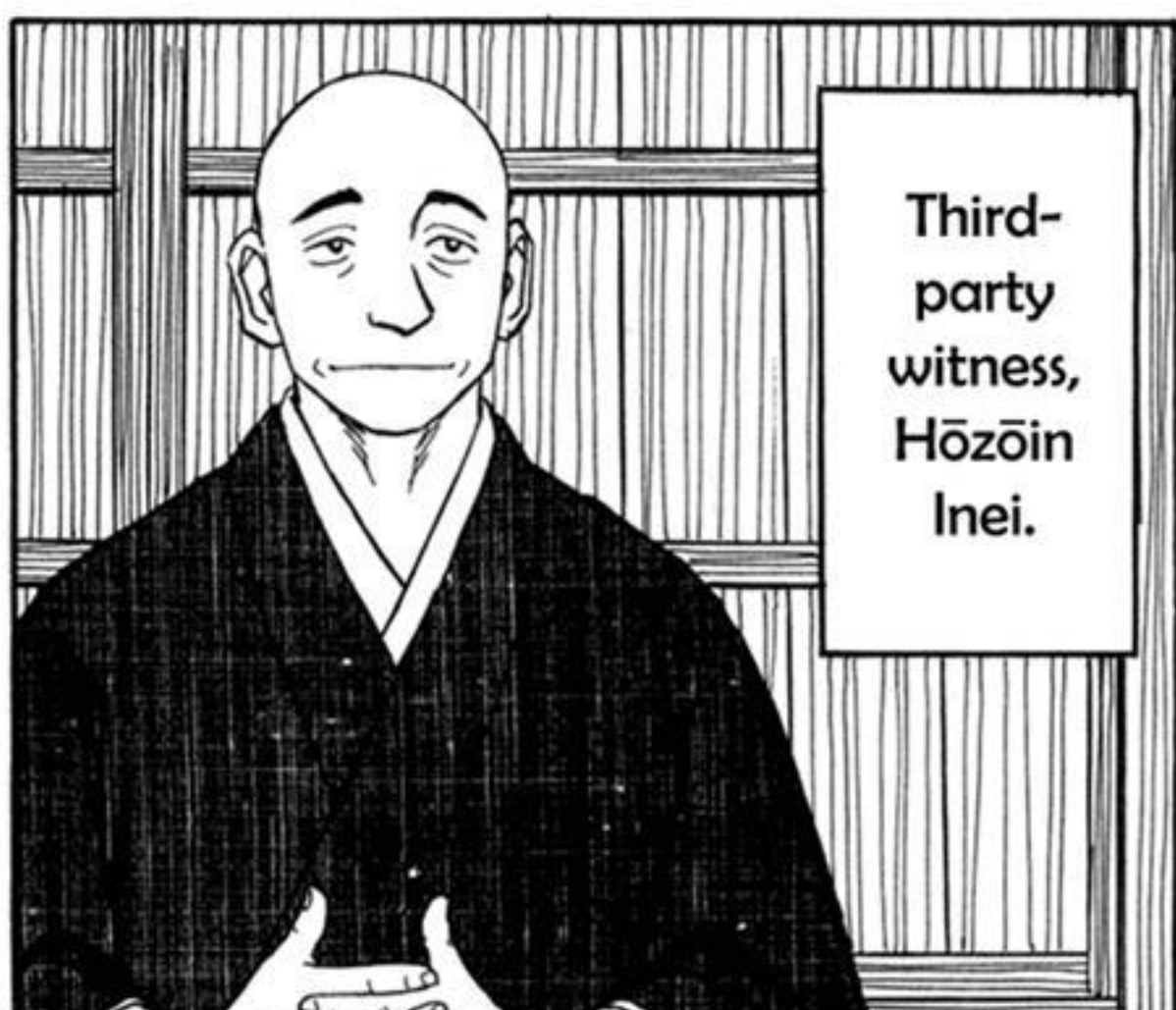
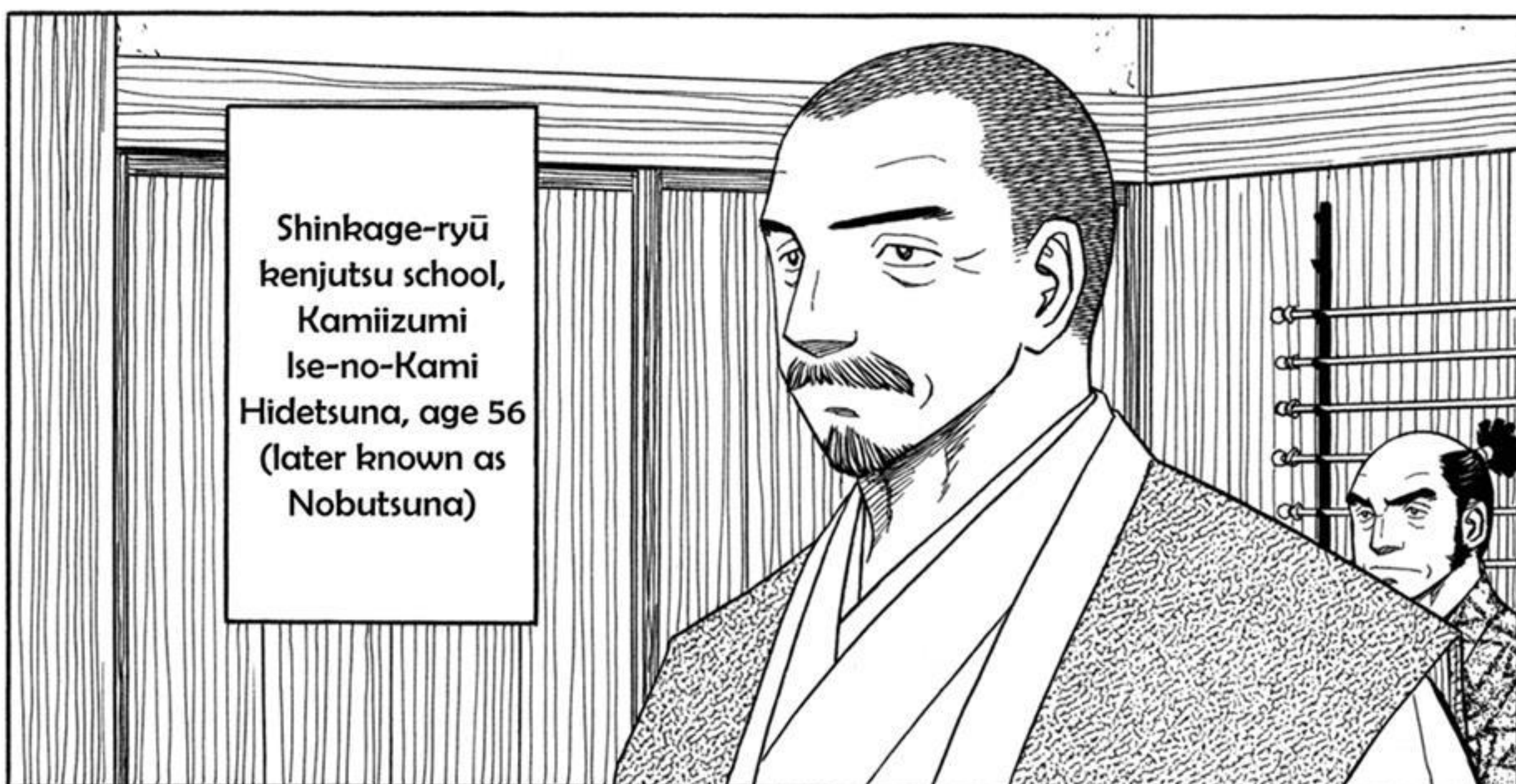


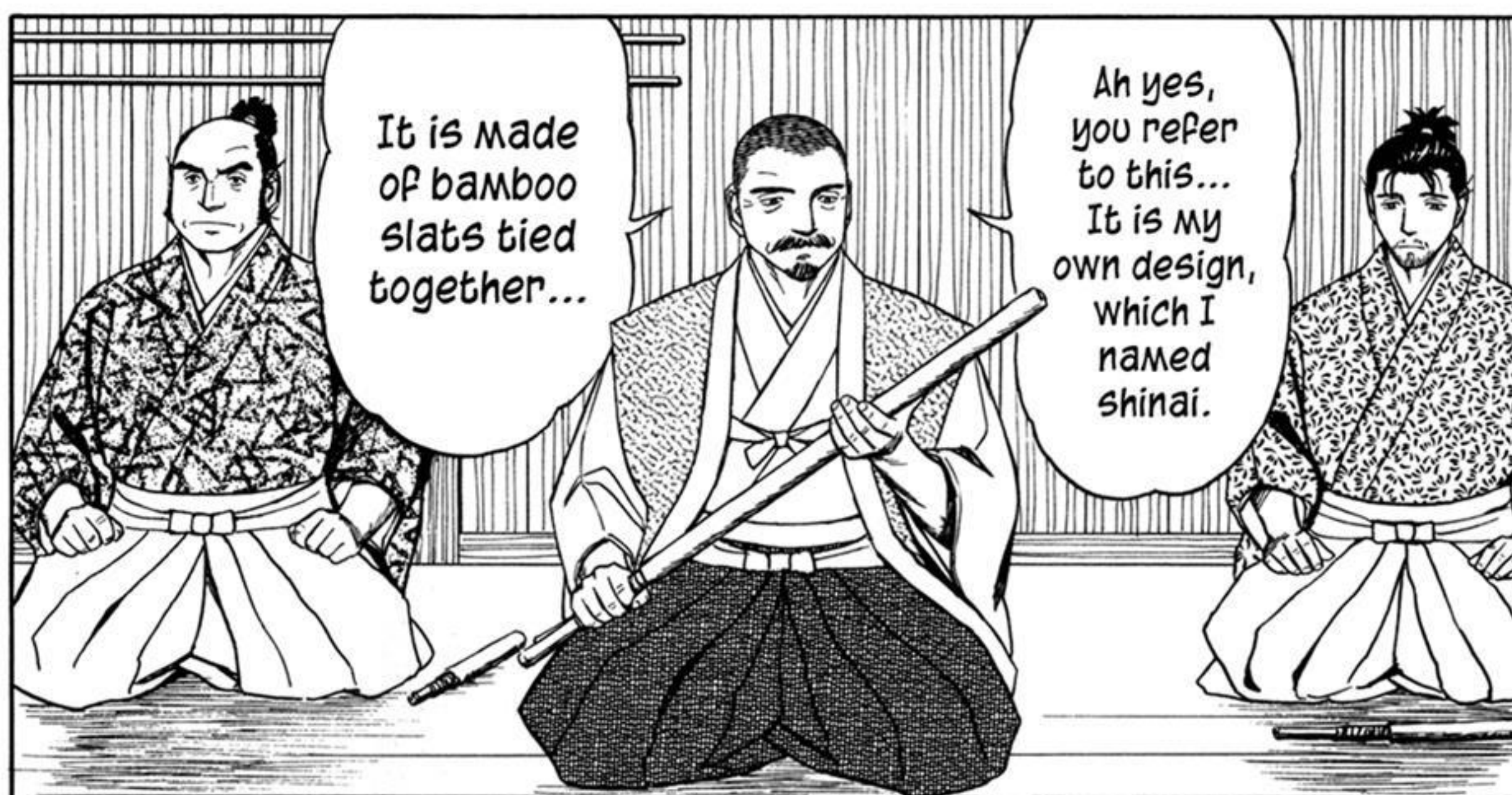
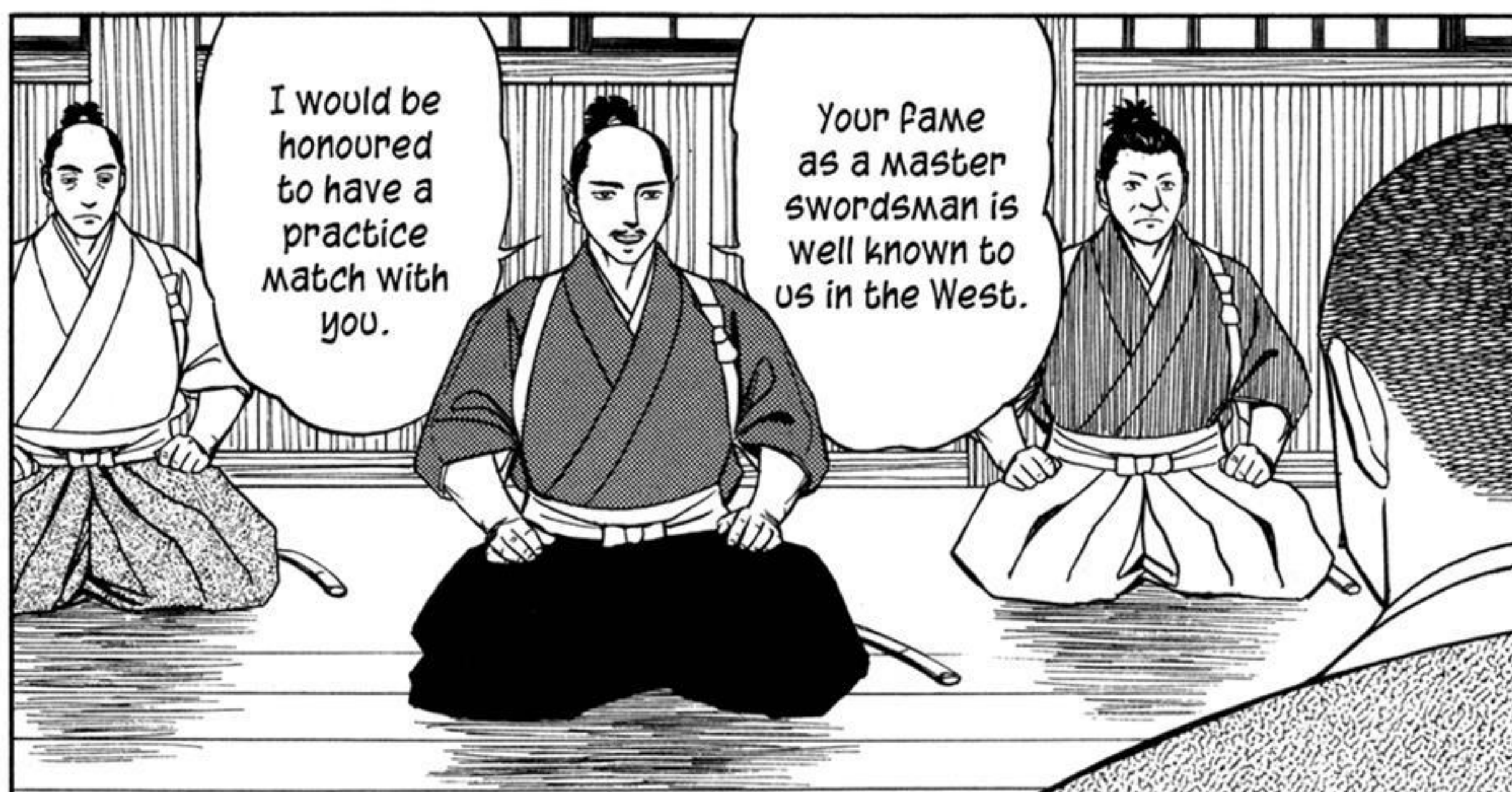


Yamato,
Nara.
Hōzōin



A watershed
moment in the
history of kenjutsu
occurred here on
this early summer's
day in the sixth year
of Eiroku (1563).

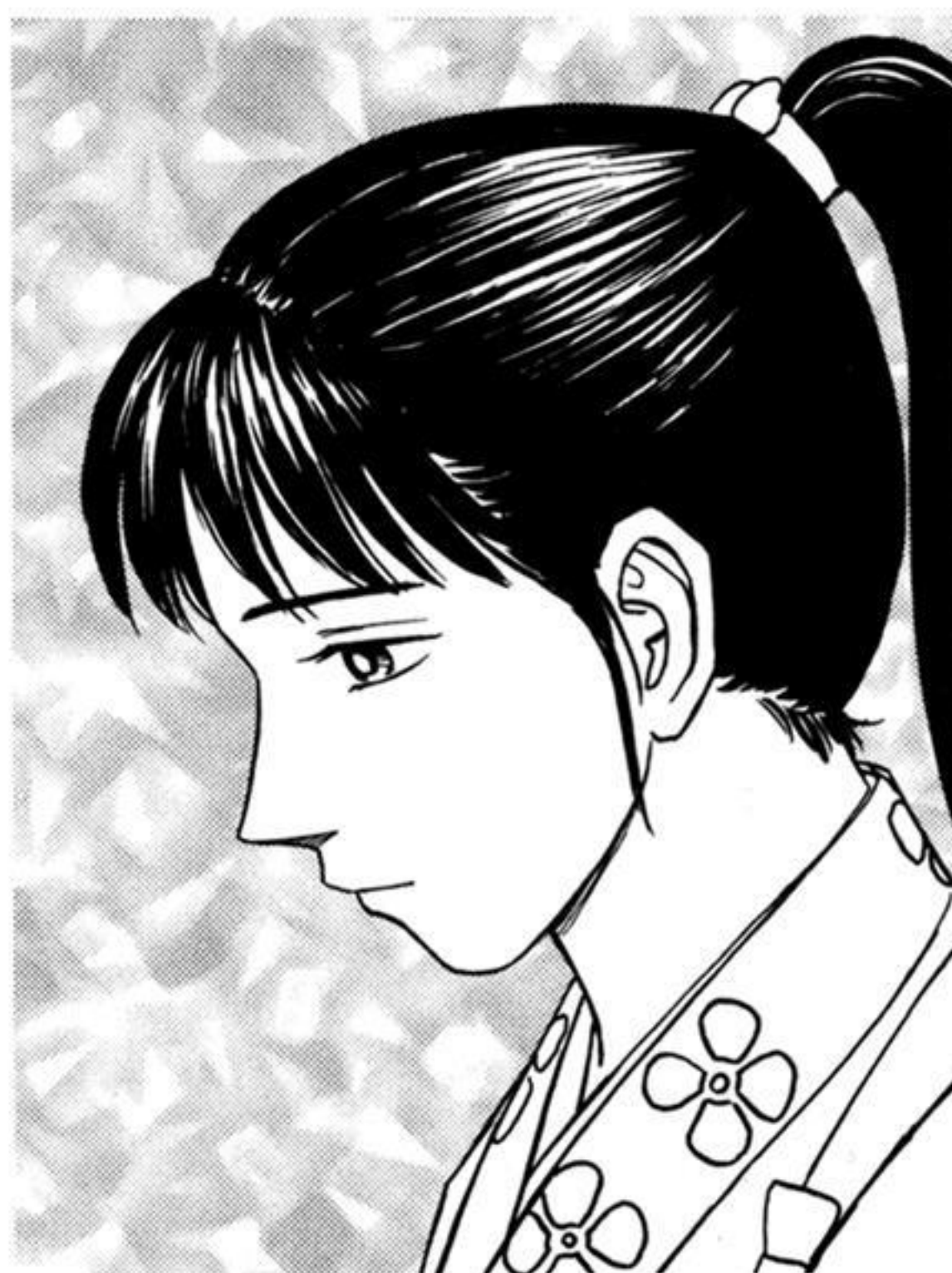
















Bungorō
cleanly beat
Yagyū three
times.



It is said he
always used
a shinai and he
never lost a
match.

Meanwhile,
Hikita Bungorō
separated with his
master and travelled
from province to
province, seeking
matches.

The great Yagyū
Shinzaemon failed to
take even a single point
from Kamiizumi's pupil
Hikita Bungorō. After this
humbling incident, Yagyū
studied Shinkage-ryū and
became its second head
after Kamiizumi's passing,
which is how the renowned
Yagyū Shinkage-ryū
school came to be.



実在人物小解説

雪の峠

梅津憲忠（半右衛門） 一五七二—一六三〇

佐竹義宣の近習、後に家老。戦場のみならず雄偉を示す逸話がいくつに残り、剛勇の士といった親があるが、渋江政光の後を引き継ぎ家老となつてからは藩政に辣腕をふるつた。

梅津政景（主馬） 一五八一—一六三三

憲忠の弟。銀山奉行から勘定奉行を経て四五歳で家老格。兄の死後家老となり久保田の町奉行を兼ねる。彼の残した「梅津政景日記」は藩政初期の国情を知る上で重要史料とされる。

梶原政景（美濃守） 一五四四—一六二三

関東の戦国武将・太田資正の次男で太田資晴という名も持つ。若い頃より文武にすぐれ父母に愛されたが、家督相続を危ぶんだ兄により城を追われ佐竹家に身をよせる。以来長期にわたり同家に仕えるわけだが「客分」としての身分は変わらなかつたらしい。しかし逆にそれが、佐竹家出奔および松平家への仕官をさほど大問題としなかつたものと考えられる。越前松平家では二千石。八十歳で没した。

川井忠遠（伊勢守） ？—一六〇三

佐竹家譜代の家臣。出羽へ国替の際は和田昭為とともに先発隊として土崎湊城を受け取る。後、渋江政光暗殺を企て梅津政景に討ち取られた。

佐竹義重 一五四七—一六二二

常陸を中心に勢力を張つた戦国大名。「鬼義重」とあだ名される程の勇将ぶりであつたというが、情勢判断も的確で早期に織田・豊臣勢力と結び、それがために佐竹家と対立関係にあつた北条・伊達家には不利に働いた。実は徳川家康とも親しかつたらしい。狩猟中に落馬して死んだという。

佐竹義宣 一五七〇—一六三三

義重の嫡男、出羽久保田藩初代藩主。石田三成と親しく、関ヶ原の戦いの前年に三成が武断派大名に襲撃された時これを救出する。鷹狩り以外に文芸への関心も高く、連歌、茶道、能楽に通じていた。進歩的で英邁な名君との評価がある一方で、猜疑心が強く残忍であつたともいわれる。

渋江政光（内膳） 一五七四—一六一四

佐竹義宣の近習からわずか三十歳で家老とな

り、禄は三千石。城の普請・城下町の整備のみならず全領土の経営に尽力し、独自に立案した「渋江田法」と呼ばれる検地法により租税の合理化を進め、藩財政の根幹を固めた。在職十一年目に大坂冬の陣が勃発、出陣した政光は前線で一隊を指揮していたが交戦中に飛弾にあたり戦死する。以降渋江家は幕末まで八人の家老を出し、藩中屈指の名家として遇された。

徳川家康 一五四二—一六一六

関ヶ原の戦いにより実質上の全国統一を果たす。東西決戦の折、佐竹軍の実戦闘は皆無であつたが、家康が佐竹を完全な敵として強く意識し警戒していたことは明らかで、出羽転封はむしろ控え目な処分と言えるかもしれない。また家康は佐竹義宣について「この上ない律儀者、律儀すぎても困る」と評しているが、真意はわからない。

本多正信（佐渡守） 一五三八—一六一六

徳川家康の側近として深謀不朗明な主君の考えをもつとも理解し、水魚の交わりとまで言われた。佐竹家国替に際しては軍勢を率いて常陸領に入り水戸城受け取りの役を務めた。後に息子の本多正純が失脚し、佐竹家に預け

られる身分となったのは少々皮肉である。

和田昭為(安房守) ？！？

義宣の祖父の代から佐竹家に仕える。佐竹家が豊臣秀吉に常陸領の支配を公認された時、本拠地となる水戸城はまだ他者の居城であったが義宣が上洛中に和田昭為らが攻め落とし、帰国の主君を迎えた。朝鮮出兵の際は名護屋参陣の義宣から国元の全権を任される。出羽転封後、間もなく引退。

剣の舞

小幡信貞(上総介) ？！一五九二

本来は長野家の娘婿で上州甘楽郡の領主だったが、一族の反乱により所領を追われる。その後、武田信玄の助力で旧領を回復するが、結果として武田と敵対する長野家を裏切る形となった。

上泉信綱(伊勢守) 一五〇八―一五七七

新陰流の創始者。上州上泉城主・上泉義綱の次男。現在も残る地名の読み方は「こういずみ」ではなく「かみいずみ」である。剣法家というより戦国武将として前半生を生き、彼は、長柄の槍を連ねた集団戦法の発達や鉄砲の普及等を他人事として無視できなかったに違いない。実戦からどんどん離れてゆく己が剣技を生かすにはと考え、結局スポーツにしてみました。竹刀はその用具となる。信綱の

唱えた「活人剣」について様々奥深い解釈があるようだが、その出発点はこのあたりにあるように思われてならない。信綱の手先となった足田景忠が竹刀片手に諸国を回り、スポーツの振興活動をしたと見るのは穿ちすぎであらうか。

神後宗治 ？！？

伊豆守、後に鈴木意伯と名乗る。もともとは長野家の家臣で上泉信綱の最古参の弟子という。上洛し足利義輝、だいぶ後に豊臣秀次に剣を教える。映画「七人の侍」の中でリーダー格の侍が僧に化け、ならず者から子供を救う場面があるが、あれはもとは上泉信綱の逸話であり神後宗治はその時に信綱が使用した僧衣を授かったといわれる。

足田景忠(文五郎) 一五三七―一六〇五

名は豊五郎、分五郎、景兼、興信、小伯、虎伯とも。剣術の師を捜していた徳川家康が上泉信綱に相談した所、信綱は弟子の足田景忠と柳生宗厳の二人を推薦した。家康は景忠を評し「たしかに足田は名手であるが所詮考え方は一兵卒のものである」として退けた。一介の剣士の景忠より、小規模ながらも一地域の領主として指揮官の資質をあわせ持つ柳生宗厳の方が家康と馬が合ったであろうことは想像できる。同様に指揮官であった上泉信綱も、あるいは新陰流興隆のためには柳生こそ後継にと考えたかもしれない。さておき景忠

の剣技は老年になっても衰えず、竹刀を用いて相手を気絶させることさえあったという。立ち合い前に相手に「それは悪し」と一声浴びせるのが彼のスタイルだったようだ。

宝蔵院胤栄 一五二一―一六〇七

上泉信綱について剣を学んだが有名な槍について成田盛忠という人物に師事した。ところが武芸好きの胤栄にとってこれはほんの一部であって、彼が教える請うた師匠は合計四十人にもなるという。研究熱心な胤栄なればこそ十文字鎌槍の考案者であるという話は多少の説得力を持つが、戦国初期の関東において松本備前守政信がすでに使いこなしていたともいわれる。

柳生宗厳 一五二九―一六〇六

晩年に石舟斎。正式には新陰流で、柳生新陰流というのは俗称だそうである。同門の足田景忠が足田陰流の祖、神後宗治が神後流、丸目藏人がタイ捨流となり柳生宗厳のみが正統な新陰流の後継者であるとされる。たしかに柳生のおかげで新陰流は徳川將軍家の剣として成功し、宗厳を選んだ上泉信綱の判断は正しかったと見ることもできる。しかし順序を逆と考えるかどうか。つまり柳生が徳川家に気に入られ剣術指南役となったために、他の新陰流たちが將軍家に遠慮して看板を変えたとする見方である。

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初出

「雪の峠」

講談社 モーニング新マグナム増刊 平成11年8号〜11号

「剣の舞」

秋田書店 ヤングチャンピオン 平成12年8号〜12号

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東京都文京区音羽二丁目一二番二一号

〒郵便番号 112-8001

講談社 アフタヌーン編集部 アフタヌーンKC係

N.D.C. 726

304p

19cm

KCデラックス—1387

ゆき
雪の峠・剣の舞
とうげ つるぎ まい

二〇〇一年三月二十三日

第一刷発行

二〇一〇年十二月二十二日

第五刷発行

(定価はカバーに表示してあります)

著者 岩明均

発行者 清水保雅

発行所 株式会社講談社



東京都文京区音羽二丁目一二番二一

郵便番号 112-8001

電話 編集部 東京(03)5395-1346

販売部 東京(03)5395-1360

装丁 工房

印刷所 図書印刷株式会社

製本所 株式会社 国宝社

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